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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A HAND WAS LAID ON THE FRENCHMAN'S COLLAR, AND HE WAS HURLED BACK UPON THE CROWD.]

OH! GIVE HIM BACK TO ME!

CHAPTER I.

"TILL DEATH US DO PART."

The first marriage in a family! What a sensation it creates, from the blushing bride herself to the kitchen-maid, who, directly the engagement is announced, wonders if she will have the honour of preparing any of the dishes for the wedding breakfast!

There was great excitement at 90, Richmond-terrace, on the morning of the second of June, but there was no sign on the outside of the house till a roll of crimson cloth appeared upon the steps. After that, an eminent florist was seen arranging pyramids of flowers on either side of the large portico, till it seemed as if the wedding-party would be so hemmed in with roses that they would never be able to make their way to the church.

There came a day not long afterwards when bride and bridegroom would have blessed any

obstacle that had kept either the one or the other from the steps of the altar that morning; but at this early hour there was not a single cloud to be seen in the azure sky of the future.

Violet Mayne, after one season in London, during which she held her pretty head so high, and would not succumb to any of her admirers, fell captive, before the year was out, to the honest, blue eyes of a certain Mr. Sartoris.

It was a disappointment to Lady Mayne, who had fondly imagined that her lovely daughter would marry a duke; but Bertie, her only son, told her that the name of Sartoris was a peerage in itself, dating back, as it did, in unbroken lineage to the days of William Rufus; that Jack Sartoris was "Hail fellow well met" with all the best people, and the out-and-out swells were only too pleased to get him for a friend. In fact, there was such a chorus of praise that the Viscountess began to be ashamed of not being more proud of her son-in-law, and she assumed an air with her feminine friends as if she thought herself the luckiest mother in the world. Down in the depths of her heart she

had a foreboding which she confessed to no one.

She could not account for it, but there it was, as she stood behind her daughter's graceful form, in the subdued light of the Abbey. It was a scene for long years engraved on her memory. The lofty arches in their solemn grandeur—the glorious tints of the rose-window, as the sunlight streamed in curious shafts of colour on the snowy dresses of the bride and bridesmaids, and the gorgeous velvets and satins of the host of friends—the mellow notes of the organ stealing softly through the hush and the stillness; the kind word whispered in her ear by Cyril Landon, whose fair face was flushed with emotion—the sudden sense that her daughter was gone from her for ever, as she passed her by on her husband's arm!

It was all over. The crowd outside looked and laughed, and chattered, and admired, till the last carriage had whirled its occupants to Richmond-terrace.

A girl, wrapped her ragged shawl round her thin shoulders, and said, with a bitter laugh,—

"Fine feathers, fine birds. Don't you think they might spare a bit of their luck for you and me?"

"Luck?" queried a woman, with a dark eager face. "Don't you be so cock sure that they've got it. Did you see her stumble over her gown as she got into the carriage? That means something, and maybe you wouldn't be in a hurry to change places with her before the year's out if you knew what was coming."

The luncheon which does duty for a wedding-breakfast—now that fashionable weddings are usually in the afternoon—was still proceeding when the bride slipped out of the room in order to take off her finery, and exchange it for a travelling-dress.

Her sister, Gertrude Mayne, followed her at once, whilst the other bridesmaids lingered to exchange laughing remarks with some of the company.

Cyril Landon, a very old friend of the Maynes, though quite a young man, called out to the bridesmaid who had fallen to his share,—

"Are you going to desert me, Miss Egerton? Come back quickly, or the consequences will be disastrous!"

"No use, Mr. Landon," said Rose Egerton, looking back mischievously over her shoulder. "We all know that your heart was broken in the Abbey to-day."

"It was, but you mended it. Come back directly, or it will come unstuck."

Mr. Sartoris flashed a quick glance at the speaker, and his face grew thoughtful for a moment; but someone was talking to him, and he had to turn his head.

"Who broke it, Mr. Landon? I didn't hear," said the soft voice of a girl across the table.

A flush passed across his boyish face. It was merely a flush of annoyance, because it did not suit his good taste to chaff about even such an old friend as Violet Mayne in public.

"The breakage was a fiction," he said, with a smile; "but the cement a happy reality. Don't you think there is some cruelty in the rule which makes the bridesmaids disappear with the bride?"

It takes a great deal to make a young man blush nowadays in these times of impudence and independence, and many people who saw the colour rise to Landon's face took it for much more than it meant.

Some of the elder ladies cogitated if it would not be as well to warn Mr. Sartoris not to let his wife have much to do with this dangerous old friend for the future, but the sight of the bridegroom's handsome face reassured them.

He was not the sort of man to have anything but a devoted affection from his wife, and there could be no fear that a girl brought up like Violet Mayne should ever let her eyes wander to forbidden fruit.

Meanwhile the last words were being said upstairs between the two sisters—those words which, even when the bride has no fear for the unknown future, are sometimes so hard to say.

Gertrude Mayne's tears were running down her cheeks as she fastened a gold bracelet round her sister's wrist.

"And you'll write to me directly you get to Paris, and you won't forget to be photographed at that place which Cyril recommended?"

"Where was it? I've quite forgotten," adjoining her veil. A tap at the door, and Bertie's voice outside: "If you don't look sharp you'll miss the train."

"Here it is, on the back of his photograph—'Cherbulier et fils, Rue—'"

"I shall never remember it," catching the photograph out of her hand, and thrusting it into the front of her dress; and then she flung her arms round her sister's neck, and cried with a little sob, "Heaven bless you, darling, we've been so happy together!"

There were more hurried farewells downstairs. But at last they were driving towards Charing Cross—only just in time for the

express, and Violet was hastily drying her tears for fear that Jack should think she was sorry.

Soon after they were steaming on their way to Dover, and Sartoris was always looking at his wife with eyes that seemed never to tire of her beauty. She was really a charming example of what Nature can fashion in her happiest mood—as white as Parian marble, with soft, dark hair rippling in natural waves over her broad, low forehead; violet eyes, which seemed to accord with her name, looking up from under a fringe of heavy lashes; a delicate nose, very straight; a mouth, beautifully curved, and a smile, so sweet and tender, as to beguile a child from its mother's arms. A long Newmarket, fitting her supple figure and small waist to perfection, reached down to the hem of her gown velvet dress; a large hat with a plume of great feathers rested slightly on one side of her curly head; and her toilette was completed by gloves of a soft tan, and high-heeled boots, which set off her small feet to the utmost advantage. Violet Sartoris looked high-bred from the curls on her forehead to the soles of her feet; and, beyond the charms of beauty and breeding, there was an expression of childlike purity on her sweet face, which had caught the fancy of the best man of the world who had chosen her for his bride.

Looking at her with fond, admiring gaze, he resolved to try and be worthy to walk through life by the side of such an angel. She had no secret flirtations, no girlish escapades to confuse in him; the page of her young, happy life was as white and unsoiled as a child's. Sitting there before her in the railway carriage, he told himself that he ought to go down on his knees and thank Heaven for giving him such a priceless gift as a wife in whom he could have the utmost confidence. Cyril Landon's was the only name that had ever been coupled with Violet Mayne's; but Lady Mayne, the girl's own mother, had assured the bridegroom that there was nothing at all between them. Mr. Landon had got into the habit of dropping in at No. 90, Richmond-terrace—he was a great friend of Bertie Mayne's, and the latter was always bringing him to the house—that was all. With this Jack Sartoris was quite satisfied; and, even the anonymous letter received before starting for the church that morning warning him of the man close at his elbow, who was hankering after forbidden fruit, had not shaken his faith for an instant. The letter was forgotten, as the bite of an insect whose sting has no power to harm.

"Does your watch go decently, darling?" he asked presently, "because if not, I'll send it back to Howell and James directly."

"I haven't looked at it to-day," she said, with a smile, as she pulled out the watch, small and jewelled with her own monogram in brilliants on the back. She held it out to him, and asked what the time really was; but no answer came. Looking at him in surprise, she saw that the blood had rushed up into his white forehead, and that his eyes were fixed on a photograph which was lying on the carpet—fixed with a stare of amazement and horror.

She bent forward with a little laugh to pick it up. "That is only Cyril's photograph," Mr. Sartoris planted his foot on it. "Where did it come from?" he asked, hoarsely, as in a moment the words of the anonymous letter came back to his memory, and a mad jealousy leapt into life in his passionate heart.

Her eyes opened wide, her pretty lips trembled. "From the front of my dress," she said softly; "I just tucked it in at the last—"

An oath broke from him in his rage. He seized her wrist, but not with the clasp of affection. "You dare to come to me with another man's portrait against your heart!"

"I only—" she began, anger, pride, and a terrible fear possessing her, and struggling for the mastery.

"Go to him," he hissed out between his clenched teeth. "I will have nothing to do with you. You have given your love to him; he may have the rest. Great Heaven! what possessed you to come to me with a lie in your lovely mouth!" clenching his fist, and striking his forehead. "You are false—false as hell!"

Indignation and pride flashed from her eyes, as she drew herself up to her full height, and wrenched her arm away from him.

"I will never—never speak to you again!" gasping like a frightened child.

"You shan't have the chance. I disown you. You took me in thoroughly," with a hard laugh; "but you won't do it again."

With a passionate gesture of contempt she tore off her left-hand glove with shaking fingers, pulled off the wedding-ring, so bright and new, and flung it on to his knee.

He bit his lip, as he twisted it between his finger and thumb. In the rage and the pain with which his heart was swelling, it was as much as he could do to behave decently. After a pause, as the train drew up in Dover Station he bent forward, and laid the ring on the cushion beside his wife, and said in a low voice,

"To prevent a scandal you had better keep it."

"I don't want it; I hate it!" she said haughtily; but, nevertheless, the ring was not left on the cushion, for she surreptitiously took it away.

CHAPTER II.

DOMESTIC.

For a long years the husband and wife never met, except for a short time on the following day. Jealousy on the one side, pride on the other, kept them apart. Each loved the other with the purest and deepest affection, and yet they behaved as if hatred of the most unflinching character had taken the place of love.

Violet was a pure, true-hearted girl, who would not have stooped to deceive a child—still less a man who married her. Perhaps because she was so innocent, her pride was all the more revealed at such a sudden, cruel, unmerited accusation.

From her babyhood she was called "the Duchess," because of the haughty way in which she carried her dainty head, and pride had often been her stumbling-block through life. Now it asserted itself, and told her that she must not act up to what she had said in her haste.

After being so brutally insulted by a man who had promised to love and cherish her only that morning, she had no choice but to maintain her dignity, and keep him at a distance for the rest of her life.

She could not get rid of his name—as you can't exactly be divorced for carrying a carte-de-visite—and it was better policy not to part with his ring on account of gossiping tongues, but she could get rid of him evidently without difficulty, and she did so with as much haste as if he had been a noxious insect intent upon stinging her soft, white arm.

Rooms had been telegraphed for at the Royal Tar, and Mrs. Sartoris was shown to them at once; but she saw nothing of her husband, who, however, had determined to wait in Dover until she started on her homeward journey, feeling bound to see that nothing happened until she was restored to her mother's care.

Susan Phillpotts, Violet's maid, was much concerned when she saw Mr. Sartoris's portmanteau marched off to another hotel. She ran after the porter, and told him that he was making a mistake; he was to bring them with the rest to the Royal Tar. Jack amazed her by saying sternly: "No mistake at all; mind your own business," in a manner so different to his usual one, that she turned away meekly without a word.

All the rest of the evening she bore the

expression of an indignant martyr, but could scarcely restrain herself from asking a string of astonished questions when the bride had her dinner alone in the charming private sitting-room which she was to have shared with her husband.

Violet only sat down to dinner for form's sake, and constrained herself to eat a mouthful now and then, in order that the waiters might not fancy that she was a broken-hearted woman. But it was a poor farce, and she was thankful when she could rise from the table, and say she wished for nothing more—only to be left alone.

There were folding-doors between the front room and the back which generally stood open; but she went into the back room, and carefully closed the doors behind her.

Now that she was alone she could give way if she liked, without any prying eyes to stare at her; but tears would not come. She threw herself down on the sofa, and sobbed; but the sobs were tearless, only gasps produced by agonising mental pain.

At home they were thinking of her so happily launched into matrimony. There would be no anxiety about her future; for Jack Sartoris, as Lord Mayne said, was such "a sterling fellow," his little girl was quite safe in his hands.

But what would they say when they heard that the "sterling fellow" had cast the little girl off, and behaved as if he had come out of Billingsgate or Whitechapel?

There was a bruise on her delicate wrist, where his angry fingers had gripped it—a bruise which she had carefully concealed from Susan's watchful eyes; but the wound in her heart was deeper.

She told herself that it would kill her, and she quite believed it. What a happiness it would be for them both if the steamer by which she was going to cross on the morrow could ground on some rocks, or at least arrive in port minus one passenger who had fallen into the sea, provided that missing one was herself.

Yes, she thought bitterly, the only way to get out of the tangle was to die; death would silence all tongues, and put an end to scandal. She would live in the memory of the fashionable world as the unfortunate young bride who was drowned at the beginning of her honeymoon, and no one would guess that the honeymoon was ended as soon as begun, or that the bride was only too thankful to be drowned.

Poor deluded mother and father! Poor deluded little sister, all so eager to receive the letter signed for the first time with a new name. How they had chaffed about that letter, and said that it would be so brimful of happiness that it would be sure to crack the envelope, and it certainly would require double postage.

And what could she say to them to prevent a great outcry, and to keep her mother from rushing down to carry her home again? She could not go back to her home, to meet with eager questionings, and the astonished stares of all her friends and acquaintances.

Who ever heard of a bride coming back again like a bad penny? A bride without a bridegroom was such an anachronism—such a poor creature—a thing with half its existence out of its frame!

She would be a byword for ever. Oh! the shame, the torture, of it! She hid her face in the cushions and groaned. Just then there was a knock at the door, and having said, "Come in," she sat up with her heart beating so fast it seemed as if it would jump out of her breast. What was it? Was it her husband coming back to her, to tell her that he had been a brute, and to beg her to forgive and forget?

Oh, in spite of pride and injured innocence she would do it. Yes, she would take him back—oh! so gladly! Steps came across the room, but they were not the footsteps she had listened to so often with ears of love; and in bitter disappointment she raised her eyes—only a letter brought in by a waiter!

She took the letter, and sat with it in her shaking fingers, not daring to open it till the servant was out of the room.

Then she tore the envelope impulsively, and read. There was no beginning—no "Dearest Violet," or "Darling Wife," or any of the endearing epithets in which young husbands are supposed to indulge. Mr. Sartoris plunged into his subject at once.

"After what I have discovered it would be ridiculous to ask you to live with me. I cannot set you free, but I will make you as free as I can. You are so young that I suppose you will go straight back to your mother, who will tell you what is best for you. I fancy Farndon Court had better be shut up for the present, but the little place in Kent shall be prepared for you at once, and your sister will probably live there with you. My bankers are Messrs. Gordon and Gregson, Lombard street, and I will tell them to send you a cheque-book. Spend what you like, only don't go beyond two thou. a year. My man of business, you know, is Charles Winterton, Lincoln's Inn. He will arrange everything for you, and you must apply to him in any difficulty. Throw the blame of this mess upon me. A man can stand that sort of thing, but a girl must be careful. For your own sake, until I am dead and out of the reckoning, don't see too much of C. L.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN DALRYMPLE SARTORIS."

Violet sat for some time, as if she were stunned. Her husband had gone from her forever—his letter clearly meant that their divided lives were never to meet again. Happiness was over. Her secure position as a married woman had gone from her—everything seemed sliding away. Was it a nightmare?—pressing her feverish hands to her throbbing temples—a horrid delusion? Jack couldn't have gone. Why, only a few hours ago his arms had been round her—his passionate kisses on her lips, his honest eyes glowing with love. And now—now he cast her off for a ridiculous trifle, and disappeared, never even telling her where he was going, or what shape his future life would take. It was past belief. Not a soul would credit it. Everybody would take it for granted that there was something shameful in the background; and she, who had always carried her head as proudly as an imperial lily, would have the finger of scorn pointed at her, and the gossips at the clubs would tell good stories about Sartoris and his wife.

Go back to her home, as her husband suggested! No, that she wouldn't! To hide herself somewhere in a corner till her wedding and everything about it was forgotten, that was her only conscious wish. Where could she go?

A bright idea flashed through her mind. There was her aunt, Lady Stapleton, living at Millefleurs, about twenty miles from Havre. She had often invited her niece to stay with her, and begged her not to stand on ceremony, but to come whenever she felt inclined.

It was too late to telegraph to-night, but a telegram should be sent as soon as it was possible the next morning. She would tell her aunt to send the answer to Calais, as she was in a fever to get out of Dover before she should come across any acquaintances, and be tortured by eager questions. A roll of bank-notes had fallen out of her husband's letter. They must be sent back to him at once. She would not touch them. She had not sunk so low as to use his money when he had cast her off.

All the anger in her heart broke out afresh. He had insulted and deserted her. And after that she would not touch a penny of his money. By her settlement she was entitled to seven hundred a year. That she would use, but no more. His two thousand he might keep to himself.

She opened her travelling bag, and got out a sheet of paper and an envelope, and wrote impulsively, when, for all she knew, this

one letter might make or mar the happiness of her life. She ought to have thought over it for hours instead of dashing it off in five minutes; but she was very young, and not accustomed to weigh either her words or her actions. Like Mr. Sartoris she began without any endearing epithet:—

"When I am without another friend in the world I may go back to Richmond-terrace, to be a nine days' wonder to my acquaintances. At present I prefer going to Millefleurs, where I believe my aunt will be willing to welcome me. I return the notes, as nothing would induce me to use them. I have fifty pounds which my father gave me when I started. So I shall not starve. I haven't a doubt that you will indulge your passion for travelling, and enjoy it thoroughly without an encumbrance, though you have told me none of your plans.—Yours truly,

"VIOLET."

And then she stopped, whilst the tears ran in a flood down her cheeks. It was her first letter since her marriage, yet she would not sign it with her new name. With an effort she controlled herself, and thrusting the bank-notes in with the letter, gave the packet to Susan to take to The Griffin. Susan suggested that it was late, but her mistress told her she must take it, whether late or early.

CHAPTER III.

"THAT OLD FRIEND!"

JACK DALRYMPLE SARTORIS was about as miserable as a man could be, as he leant over the side of the steamer with folded arms, looking down into the waves, as they danced in the autumn sunshine. He could scarcely credit it now. The one girl in the world, whom he had believed to be perfectly true and honest, was it possible that she had been acting a part day after day, returning his caresses with her own sweet lips, whilst in the depths of her heart she was cherishing an affection for another? Could anything be more monstrous than carrying that other man's photograph close to her heart on her wedding-day? Perhaps she might have gone on fooling him to the last, if he had not happened to ask that innocent question about her watch. In his pocket he had found the anonymous letter, which he had meant to throw into the fire, and his jealousy had fed upon it like a flame on a heap of dry wood.

Of course he must have been blind all along—blinder than any bat. He had been as innocent as a boy of sixteen, and taken Cyril Landon for a harmless friend of the family. They all called him by his Christian name, so he had said nothing against Violet's doing the same; although every time she said "Cyril," it jarred upon him as an unnecessary familiarity. Now he loathed the thought of having kissed her, when she was thinking of Landon all the time, and no doubt watching the door in hopes that he would interrupt a tedious *tête-à-tête*.

She was lost to him for ever. It was not a case for forgiveness; she loved someone else; therefore she could not love him, and no amount of scolding would win that love from Landon to himself.

It was a *flasco*, for which there was no remedy, as long as they both should live. If one should die, the other would be free. The chances were that he would die the first. There would be nothing now to keep him back from being as reckless as he pleased; and a reckless sportsman generally has a short life, if a merry one whilst it lasted.

How many had met their deaths through a loaded gun carried carelessly in the excitement of sport, or the slipping of a foot on the steep side of a hill? And then a corpse lay quivered amongst the heather, with white face turned to the skies, a useless gun lying on the grass. A pointer watched in the silence with drooping ears. And far away in some

English home the tidings would travel on sable wings, and the cry of bitter weeping would take the place of joyous laughter, and more than one life would be darkened, like the shuttered rooms of the old house, where the sportsman had played when a boy—and so much the better for the man. He was dead and out of the way of treacheries and deceptions.

No woman could fool him again. Though his life was strong within him, his health perfect, his fortune secure, Jack Sartoris felt as if he should like to change places with any confined stranger; like to be buried, and out of "the fret and the fume," because one little girl had disappointed him, and that little girl happened to be his wife. And yet, if he had found himself in the sea, he certainly would have tried to struggle out of it. If the ship he was on had caught fire, he would certainly have hoped to get into a boat; and if he had seen the muzzle of a gun pointed at him, he would certainly have turned it aside if he could. And yet he was honest in thinking he would like to die, in order to free his wife from a hateful chain. Only he deceived himself, as we all do at times.

Later in the day he was one unit, whilst his wife was another, in a crowd of tourists waiting to be admitted to the platform of a station belonging to the Coast Railway. Violet Sartoris, after waiting a little while at an hotel, received a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would be delighted to welcome her, and would send an old friend to meet her.

She knew that her husband had been on board the boat, though she remained below and he kept out of sight, but she did not know that he had made it a point of honour to see her safely lodged under her aunt's roof before he returned to London to make his arrangements for the future.

She was frightened at the attentions of a fat Frenchman, who had apparently taken too much. He kept assuring her that he would take care of her, murmuring vulgar compliments under his breath in a way that disgusted her beyond measure.

The faithful Susan was separated from her hopelessly, in spite of frantic efforts to get nearer to her mistress, and the fat man's garlic-scented breath was in her face, whilst another man's infamous cigar was nearly choking her. She gave a little gasp, and in a moment the Frenchman's arm was thrown round her protectingly, to her great disgust. "Madame ill?" he asked, whilst she struggled wildly to set herself free, but he said no more, for a hand was laid on his collar, and gasping for breath he was hurled back upon the crowd, whilst a broad-shouldered Englishman stood with glaring eyes between him and the pretty girl whose attractions had excited his brain.

With a volley of oaths and clenched fists he was advancing towards them when the doors were thrown open, and they passed through on to the platform. He was about to follow, when he was peremptorily told to halt, as there was something wrong with his ticket. Whilst he was fretting and fuming, the strangely-assorted pair walked on together.

If Jack Sartoris would have given but one look into Violet's face, the quarrel might have ended then and there; but with lips closely set, and chin high in the air, he strode on, whilst she followed, her knees knocking together, her lips trembling, her cheeks white as a swan's wing. Arrived at the door of an empty coupé, he saw her into it, closed the door, raised his hat, and walked off, whilst the cry with which she would have detained him froze on her lips. Thanks to Sartoris's injunctions and liberal tip no one was allowed to disturb her, and she was left alone with her miserable thoughts in proud isolation.

The mere sight of his handsome face had brought back all her painful longings for a reconciliation, that she might feel the sweetness of his affection, and trust herself completely to his care. In spite of all he had said he must care for her still. Was he not watching over her now, ready and willing

to help her whenever she wanted his assistance? Oh, the quarrel was a mere farce.

When they arrived at Millefleurs she would go up to him, and explain everything. She had been too angry to say anything in her own defence, and she had let the worst suspicions take root in his mind without an effort to combat them. She sat with clasped hands and wide-open eyes, staring at the flying landscape. Rather a dreary look-out before the picturesque scenery of Normandy was reached, but she saw nothing but a pair of angry blue eyes, and the poplars and the long straight roads, and the uninteresting levels were as if they had no existence.

Meanwhile, in another carriage, not far off, Jack Sartoris was biting the ends of his long moustaches, and chewing the cud of bitter recollection. It had cut him to the heart to see his own young wife alone in a vulgar crowd, and a pang had gone through him like the thrust of a dagger, when it flashed through his mind that so it might always be in the future. He was her natural protector, and when he was gone she would have to struggle alone against the world. And then remorse came over him, and he acknowledged that he had been too quick in his denunciation, and a great longing came after to set everything right, and take her back to his throbbing heart. He had left her no time for explanation; he had crushed her, poor little thing, with his fierceness, as he might have crushed a gnat with his hand. And then common-sense raised her voice, and told him no amount of explanations could do any good. A girl must love a man whose photograph she kept concealed next her heart, and if she loved Cyril Landon, their married life, if spent together, would be almost like a hell upon earth. He leant his head upon his hands, and thought and thought—tempted to yield by the longing to protect her, held back by the remembrance that she had sinned against the commonest code of honour.

He was not prone to vacillation, but the sight at the station had revolted him, and the vulgar Frenchman had been enough to shake his firm resolve. She would be safe from anything of that kind when she got amongst her own people. When they arrived at Millefleurs Lady Stapleton would be there to meet her niece, of course, and some member of her own family would always be told off to look after her, for Lady Mayne, though a woman of fashion, was evidently a careful mother. He need have no uneasiness on that score, and yet he could not help being as uneasy as possible and tortured by a thousand doubts. Reason as he might, he could not get rid of the fact that he had taken an oath before Heaven to protect her "till death did them part."

In schoolboy parlance, that was "a stumper." If any evil came upon her pretty head through his desertion, the responsibility would be on his own conscience. He could not leave her—he could not remain with her. He stretched out his arms with a groan. Just then the train steamed slowly into the station at Millefleurs, and he jumped up with a sudden quick resolve to take her back and win her love by the magnetic power of his own.

He sprang out of the train when it had barely stopped, and pushed his way through a knot of passengers who blocked his path. And then, in another moment, the smile died away on his lips, the eager light went from his eyes, and with a curse hissed out between his clenched teeth he turned back, and scrambled into the first carriage he came to, not caring where he went, so long as he left his wife far enough behind.

A young man, with a pleasant, good-looking face, and a very slight form, clad in a thick ulster, bowed, and then held out a pair of eager hands to help Mrs. Sartoris out of her coupé.

Above the bustle and the clacking of Norman tongues around, Cyril Landon's clear,

English voice rang out with fatal distinctness.

"So enchanted to get your wire. I swore I'd be the one to meet you. There's a rum sort of dog-cart outside in which I'm to have the honour of driving you. So awfully good of you"—with a sort of accentuated wonder in his tone—"to give Sartoris the elip for a few hours. You are sure he's not at your elbow?"

And then the train moved on, and no one but Landon himself heard the surprised question after her aunt, from Violet's lips, as her eyes wandered wistfully up and down the platform, and filled with disappointed tears, when she found that Susan's was the only familiar face to be seen in the dim light.

Mr. Landon explained presently that he was staying with Lady Stapleton. The old lady had a cold, and could not turn out, so the pleasure had fallen to him, but Violet did not hear him. She was leaning against the wall, whilst the tears she could not stop were running down her cheeks.

And Jack Sartoris, with every worst suspicion confirmed, was being carried further and further away, the veins on his forehead swollen, his heart almost bursting with rage, his fists clenched. He could not touch a rival so slight, so thin, that he could almost have crumpled him up in his strong right hand, but if curses could now have the power to kill, Cyril Landon—as innocent and harmless a young fellow as ever stepped—would have died that very hour.

(To be continued.)

TWICE CHOSEN.

—30:—

CHAPTER XIX.—(continued.)

So a month afterwards Adela Thorndyke and her mother were visitors at Marsden Hall, and Lillian and Sir Richard could not make enough of them.

"Horace," said the Baronet one day, "come and dine with me this evening, and bring your brother Bob with you. I have not forgotten that he did your work for you while we were at Mentone. He is a nice young fellow, and we must change him from a deacon into a priest as quickly as possible."

"He will be very pleased to accept your kind invitation, I am sure. He is fretting at the thought that he will have to leave here, poor old boy, but it is possible he might be re-engaged if you would recommend him to the new Rector."

"I'll see, lad, I'll see!" said Sir Richard. "You can both stay and talk to me when the ladies have retired this evening."

They did so; and the Baronet sat gazing upon the ground.

Suddenly he looked up.

"It seems like robbing the dead," he said with emotion, "to put any one in dear old Thorndyke's place; but the living must be given away. Winsthorne cannot be without a rector, so I mean to present it to the person who I think my poor friend would like best to see in his shoes, of whom I have heard him speak in warm terms."

"I quite understand your feelings, sir," replied the Curate. "It will be pain to me to see any other man in his pulpit, but I have grown fond of the people, and I should grieve to leave them. I have been hoping for your good word to the new Rector, if you think he is likely to require a helper."

"I don't think he is in the least likely to want one," replied the Baronet, with a smile, and a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. "He will be a strong young fellow, and able to do the work for himself."

The shadow of disappointment fell across Robert Lake's face.

"Then I am afraid there is but little chance for me," he said.

But Sir Richard did not seem to notice his remark.

He turned to Horace.

"Let me see—how old are you now?"

"I am twenty-five," he answered, readily.

"And your brother?"

"Bob is three months over twenty-four; we came near together; Tom is considerably younger. By-the-by, sir, he has got his commission."

"Has he? Well, he's a smart lad; he will make a good-looking soldier."

"His heart was set upon it. I'm very glad he has been able to follow his bent."

"Yours was the same way, my boy, was it not?" asked the Baronet.

"In years gone by, sir, but I am most thankful now that I remained here."

"Why?"

"For Lillian's sake."

"What, you don't believe in truth in absence?"

"Indeed I do, but we shall be much happier as it is."

"Yes! you are right, Horace; Lillian must have a settled home."

Suddenly he turned to Robert.

"Now, young man, what can I do for you?" he asked.

"For me, sir? Nothing, thank you," he stammered. "Had there been any chance of my being able to remain here, I would have asked you to help me in the matter, but as it is—"

"As it is, I owe you something for being a good-natured fellow, and doing your brother's work for nothing; and I want to get out of debt. Can't you think of any favour to ask?"

"I can't, indeed."

"Humph! You're slow to seize an opportunity. Why don't you ask for the living for yourself, eh?" and Sir Richard looked at him keenly.

Robert Lake flushed.

"You are laughing at me, sir," he said respectfully; "and, besides, I understood you had decided upon whom you mean to bestow it. Moreover, I am too young to solicit such favours, or to dream of such patronage."

"In fact, you prefer being a curate? You're a perfect Tommy-too-good, eh! Master Bob? You're too young to see the advantages of having a living," laughed the Baronet.

"No, no. I'm not so young as that!" returned Bob, laughing too.

"Oh! not too young to accept a good living if ever it comes in your way, eh?"

"It is not likely to come in my way, sir!"

"I'm not so certain of that. Have you got your eye on a sensible wife, my boy? In my humble opinion a parson should be a married man as well as a doctor."

The hot blood rushed into Bob Lake's face.

"Hallo! I see you have. Now, out with it. Who is the lady of your choice?"

"Really sir!" he began.

"Nonsense! Let me hear if the lady is suitable; it's as much my business as yours."

"Excuse me, Sir Richard, but I really can't see that. If my heart has gone out to any one during the past few months, the fact is known only to myself."

"What, have you not told her? Men were not so cautious when I was young," chuckled the Baronet.

"What had I to offer, sir? And, besides," he added, growing crimson, "I have no reason to believe that she cares in the least for me. She is very gentle and kind, but I have noticed that she is so to the poorest man in the parish."

"In the parish!" repeated Sir Richard, regarding him intently. "You don't mean to say—"

"Bob!" cried Horace, "it's Adela. I see it all now. How I wish she would have you. Oh! shouldn't we all be happy?"

"I wouldn't ask her," blurted out poor Bob.

"Then it is Scamp!"

"I'm not ashamed to own my love for her, but, remember, I'm not going to tell her of it unless better times come, although in her trouble I have longed to ask her to let me comfort her, longed to shield her in some measure from the hard corners of life, which seem to grow sharper as troubles increase; but I will never ask a girl like Adela to undergo a life of poverty for my sake," he added, with feeling.

Sir Richard had been staring blankly at the speaker for some time. Then he rose and paced the room with bent head, and down-cast eyes.

"If it could be, it would be best so," he murmured. "If ever I let another thought creep in, it was folly—folly, utter folly. It would settle the whole question. Yes; it would be best so!"

Suddenly he stopped by Bob's chair, and laid his hand kindly upon the young man's shoulder.

"My boy, if Adela loved you she would follow you to the world's end if you had not a penny in your pocket. She is a noble girl. I know none other like her—not even my own daughter. Still I respect your scruples, and poverty shall not stand in your way. As soon as you have taken priest's orders, and are able to hold it, the living of Winsthorpe shall be yours. I had intended this before I was aware of your adoration for my young favourite. Now I have double pleasure in bestowing it upon you. It would be a happy life for the dear girl to follow in the honourable and honoured footsteps of her parents. She loves the Rectory—every tree and shrub and flower. Every briek has a meaning for her beyond others. She will be glad to stay in her old home if she can care for you. If she does not, nothing will tempt her. In confidence, it was my intention that she and Mrs. Thorndyke should not leave their beloved home. I meant to have given the old place to them, and to have built a new Rectory-house near the church. Should Adela accept you, this will become unnecessary, for I am sure you would not desire to part her mother from her, and I should expect you to give Mrs. Thorndyke a suite of apartments for her own use, Mr. Bob."

Robert Lake's colour came and went like a girl's, through his fair skin. He could not believe his own ears—could not believe that at twenty-four he was to hold a good living, to be able to ask Adela to be his wife, to offer her her dear old home, to remain near his own father and mother and Horace, and the people he had learnt to love!

He could scarcely find a word wherewith to thank his benefactor, but the Baronet liked him none the less for that fact.

"Do you really mean it, sir?" he faltered; "it seems all too bright for reality."

"I never say what I don't mean, lad," returned Sir Richard, kindly; "so you may go home, and dream about it with safety."

"Bob, I congratulate you with all my heart!" cried Horace, seizing him by the hand, and shaking it as though its dislocation were his one object in life. "If only Scamp will say yes! but don't hope too much for that. Anyway, you're the luckiest young parson I know. Fancy your becoming the Rector of Winsthorpe at twenty-four! Won't Lillian be pleased?"

"I hope she will," said the Baronet, smiling.

"I think so. I wondered often she didn't ask the favour herself."

"None of us ever dreamed of such a piece of good fortune," said Horace. "And Sir Richard, I don't know how to thank you for all your kindness to Bob, and to me too, during the last year and a-half. It has been a truly happy time to me."

"Thank me by acts, lad, not by words. Continue to make my little girl as happy as you are now doing, and I shall be satisfied. I shall require no further proof of your gratitude; and Horace, my boy, I have ceased to regret Lillian's choice. You're a good and honest fellow."

A sunbeam seemed to pass over the young man's face.

"Those are the best words I have ever heard in my life, sir," he exclaimed with emotion. "Next to when my darling confessed her love to me, I thought nothing could make me happier save the right to call Lillian my wife; but now I know that I was wrong, for you have lifted from my heart its last regret. In time, sir, I earnestly hope you will learn to regard me as a son."

"My lad, I do so already. Indeed, I have done so for a long time, but I have been too proud to acknowledge the fact, after my long opposition; but that dear girl's sweet, sad face softened me, and I made up my mind I would tell you so to-night."

"You mean Adela's?"

"Yes, Horace. There is no other living face so sweet, and sad, and bright, by turns, and every mood seems to suit her best. I thought she never appeared so beautiful as she did to-night in her sable garments; her look was utterly *spirituelle*! If that young rascal gains her he must be born under a lucky star indeed."

"I know it, sir, and I am not very hopeful at present," said Bob. "Adela may in time get to like me, but I am not very sanguine about it."

The old man shook his head.

"I don't believe in that sort of courtship, lad. Love is spontaneous. If she has no thought of you now, she never will have."

"Men have overcome even dislike, sir; and have gained the love they desire in the end," said Bob, warmly.

"Perhaps! Better dislike than indifference. Moreover, they gain affection, not love, and it is not gained from such girls as Adela Thorndyke. There is nothing lukewarm about her. There are women who are little better than machines. They marry the first man who asks them, and one is as capable of making them contented as another."

"You are right, sir," said Horace. "If Adela does not really care for Bob, he may give it up at once. Time will never change her."

"I think, like myself, you understand her, my boy," said Sir Richard, approvingly. "And now, young gentlemen, I've had enough of you both. Go home to bed, the pair of you. Robert, I wish you joy; and you, my lad, a continuance of it," as he gave Horace a bright nod and a slap on his shoulder.

Then he shook the young curate's hand, and almost turned them out of the house.

"They are both good lads," he murmured, as he went upstairs to his bed-chamber, "and there is real pleasure in giving happiness."

"Papa, is anything the matter?" asked Lillian, fluttering out of her room in her pretty dressing-gown.

"Nothing, my child, except that you ought to be in bed and asleep," he said decidedly.

"I have been listening for Horace to go," she returned. "I never knew him stay so late after I had gone, and I feared something might be wrong."

"Ah! you thought you were the only attraction in the house, did you, lassie? and you may yet learn that you have to be jealous of your old father, for Horace and I are growing very fond of each other."

"I am so, so glad, father dear," she said softly, as she clung to his arm, and looked lovingly in his face. "He is a dear old fellow, is he not?"

"Yes, child, he's a good lad."

"And you don't wonder that I love him so dearly?"

"Not very greatly," he returned with a smile, as he kissed her. "Go to bed, my dear. Where will your roses be to-morrow? Did you leave your friends comfortable?"

"Comfortable, yes! But oh! father, I cannot bear to look at Dela. She never says a word, but I really believe that her heart is breaking."

"Poor girl, poor girl, I wish I knew how to make her happy."

"And I."

"Lilian, are you in her confidence?"
"No, papa; and if I were I could not betray it."

"Then we must pray to a higher power to help her, my dear; it is all we can do."

"Yes, I fear so!" replied Lilian sadly, and they bade each other good-night.

"Horace," said his brother, in a low voice, as they walked home side by side, "you have known Adela so long, do you think I have any chance?"

"Faint heart never won fair lady, old boy. She is worth trying for," returned he, cheerfully.

"Ay! but you don't think she cares for me?"

"How on earth should I know!"

"You—you don't think she loves anyone else?" he questioned, anxiously.

"Would she be likely to tell me if she did?"

"I don't know; you have always been such friends, or Lilian might have told you."

"Neither Lilian nor Adela have told me anything, Bob, old boy; so you can but hope, and, remember, if Adela won't have you, there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

"Could you have comforted yourself with that idea, Horace, if Lilian had said no to you?" asked Robert, with a sad smile.

"No, Bob, I couldn't; and that's a fact."

"I thought not, no more can I," replied the other, brokenly.

And the rest of the way the brothers walked on in silence.

In their father's hall they clasped hands.

"Don't lose heart, old boy," whispered Horace; "you can still hope."

"Yes, I can hope," returned the other, but he did not go up to bed with so light a heart as he ought to have done as the future Rector of Winthorpe.

CHAPTER XX.

A RUNAWAY PONY.

ADELA, innocent of the affectionate adoration of the young curate, so soon to be made Rector in her father's stead, received him in the kindest spirit, fearing to damp his pleasure by seeming to grudge him the position which her own dear one could no longer hold.

Both she and Mrs. Thorncliffe were truly glad that the poor of Winthorpe who had so long been their care, should have so kind and good a pastor as Robert Lake had proved himself to be during those trying months when Mr. Thorncliffe had been among them, and yet unable to attend to his duties.

He had shown both zeal and tact, and patience, winning the good opinion of all around him; and they felt that it would be his pride to follow out all the plans and wishes of his predecessor, and to keep things going upon the same footing as they had been.

Adela warmly entered into all his thoughts and feelings about parish matters, and evinced more signs of life and energy than she had done since the blow fell, which had at the same time been both expected, and unexpected.

She congratulated Sir Richard upon his wisdom in having selected Robert Lake, young though he was; and the Baronet smiled, sadly enough, but still he smiled.

Perhaps, after all, it was the young curate who had made a captive of the girl's heart, since it was not Lord Carruthers, as he had imagined; and of course, if so, his position, or the want of it, would fully account for there being no engagement between them, as well as for both the young people pining in secret.

And yet, good as Robert was, and honest and kind, he was scarcely the man Sir Richard would have pictured as the one to gain and enchain the heart of his favourite.

He felt that he should be more than glad when something should be settled.

In six months his promise to Lilian and

Horace must be fulfilled. He must part from his child.

His mind was filled with half-formed desires, and shadowy resolves, concerning them both; but before he could really look the matter in the face, of one thing he was determined—to do his best to settle some future for Adela and her mother.

He would wait now until Winthorpe's future Rector should plead his cause. If she should accept him, the matter would be soon arranged. If not, it was still left for him to see to their comfort, which as the Rector's old friend he would willingly have done, even if Adela had not been his bean ideal of living women.

But as it was, he felt it would be an equal pleasure to him to secure happiness to her as it would have been had she been his own daughter.

Horace, looking on, felt hope for his brother grow.

Adela was so bright with him, so different from the pathetic-faced Adela, whom he oftentimes found when alone.

He spoke of it to Lilian, and the girl started.

"Robert loves our Dela!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "Well, poor old boy, I do not wonder. I wish she could fancy him, but if there were no other reason I should imagine he is too young for her!"

"Why Lil, there is only one year between us!" Horace returned.

"True, boy, but Bob is not you, you know," and she turned a pair of saucy, loving, brown eyes up to his face.

He stooped and kissed her.

"Little flatterer," he whispered, "but Bob is a better fellow than I am!"

"It is quite right you should think so," she said, letting her hand wander among his warm, curly hair, while the smile deepened about her mouth; "but I know you're worth a dozen Bobs. Still he is a good boy too, as being your brother he could not fail to be; but Horace, dear, it seems to me that Dela must have some one very out of the common, Lord Carruthers would have done for her!"

"Evidently she did not think so," returned Lilian's lover, mischievously, "for she certainly could have had him if she had so desired."

"That is true," she acknowledged, reluctantly.

"Now, pet, cannot you suggest someone else who is more suited to her than poor old Bob?" continued Horace, quizzically.

She remained in thought for awhile, then she looked up at him with a sudden brightness.

"Horace, do you remember Major Egerton?"

"What, the old young man who surprised me giving Scamp a letter for you in the tent who glared at me so murderously that I began to think he was a rival for your hand, darling! Oh! yes, I have not forgotten him; and a precious disagreeable-looking fellow I thought him."

"Nonsense, dear, he was an eminently handsome man, a symphony in autumn tints, a picture man! and a brave fellow to boot."

"Well! all I can say is, he must have looked at you with a very different expression of countenance to that with which he honoured me. I thought him diabolical!" he retorted, dogmatically.

"Green eyes!" laughed Lilian. "Major Egerton is undeniably handsome; but you would never think anyone good enough for Dela, if it came to the point."

"Yes, I should. I would like to see her Bob's wife merrily."

"Of course; then she would be your sister, you old sinner. But I tell you that poor old Bob will never gain her."

"I am sorry for it. The disappointment will go near to breaking his heart!"

Then he added suddenly—

"Lilian, if you know anything, it will be only right to speak. If Adela is already

engaged we must not let poor old Robert make himself ridiculous."

"No, she is not engaged, dear!" replied Lilian, sadly; "of that I am certain, but more I cannot say."

Horace had felt a little ruffled that Lilian should place any other before his brother as more eligible for the hand of his old playmate; but it quickly wore off, and he said warmly,—

"Well, pet, watch them together. No one arouses Adela from her lethargy like Bob after all, and I think he has a chance."

Lilian did watch them, and was bound to confess that Horace was right.

Was it possible that Dela had forgotten? Had she really determined to let the past rest, and go into oblivion, and to attempt a new path in life?

She knew how she loved her old home, and might not the fact that if she could care for Bob she need never leave it, be an inducement to her to accept the new Rector for her husband?

If even Adela's best friends began to look upon the alliance as possible, need it be wondered at that hope increased in the heart of her lover?

He hovered about her path. He brought her every scheme, every plan and thought, in connection with Winthorpe, to ask her advice and learn her wishes upon it. And Adela, remembering only what her father would have desired, entered into it all for his dear sake, little understanding the construction which was being put upon her conduct.

And so things went on, but Bob never found himself sufficiently at home with her to plead his cause; and day by day the Baronet interrogated him with word or look, to receive the same answer.

"I have never had the chance, sir."

"Chance!" repeated Sir Richard, warmly. "When I was young, men made opportunities, now they expect them arranged for them. Very well, young man; I must find you the chance, I suppose. Come here to lunch to-morrow, and leave the rest to me."

So it turned out that the next morning the Baronet sat down beside Adela for a talk. Robert Lake had been asking his help for a labourer, living some miles distant upon the very borders of the parish, upon whom some timber had fallen, rendering the poor fellow perfectly helpless.

He had been carried to his poor home, and had lain there for a month past in an abject state of suffering and poverty, his wife being unable to leave him and her large family of little ones, to go out to earn anything.

"Adela," said Sir Richard, "something must be done for that poor fellow Jenkins; his case is a pitiable one. Suppose we drive over and see him this afternoon?"

"With pleasure, dear Sir Richard," she answered, readily. "It is so little I can do now; I am no longer in the groove to be of use to anyone. I shall be only too glad to go with you!"

"Well, well, who knows how soon a life of usefulness may again be yours, my dear? At any rate, we will see what we can do to-day."

At the commencement of his speech she had glanced up at him inquiringly, but the finish seemed to satisfy her.

"At what time shall we start?" she asked.

"Let us say three o'clock; that will give the down-train time to pass. You must cross the line to get to Jenkins' cottage, you know, and 'Fary' objects to steam power; nothing else makes him carry out his cognomen. So, my dear, return over the line at once, as there are no other trains due till half-past four. Then you will miss both; when you are this side of the cutting again, drive where you like," he added, kindly.

"You will be there, to decide for yourself and me?" she returned with a smile, in which he joined.

"Oh! ah! yes! of course, I was forgetting," he admitted, which was true, but not quite in the sense she understood.

Winthorpe's future Rector arrived between twelve and one, and never before had Adela found him so quiet and even shy.

She told him of their contemplated drive to the aid of his protégé Jenkins, which appeared to please him, but otherwise he was undoubtedly ill at ease, and his eyes turned restlessly towards the door whenever it opened.

Sir Richard had promised that day to make an opportunity for him to speak to Adela, but this could not be it, for Mrs. Thorndyke sat there in her widow's cap with her saddened face, and her everlasting knitting.

She always carried it in her pocket, and those many minutes which are usually wasted by most of us, in her case represented each Christmaslike innumerable warm stockings and socks for the poor.

And Lillian was there too, trying by her lively sallies to cheer the mourners.

Luncheon was announced, and Sir Richard joined them.

He, too, was unusually silent and thoughtful, and none of the party felt very sorry when the meal was over.

"Well, lassie," he said, as they were moving away to the drawing-room, "remember the pony will be at the door at three. I know you like the little trap better than what you call 'riding in state,' he laughed, and he signed with her until suddenly prevented by some unexpected business matter.

"I can't say I do at present, sir; and if Miss Thorndyke is going out at three, I don't know how I am to get her alone."

"Of course she is going out at three, and you are going with her; not I, as she supposes. It had better seem an accidental thing. Do you understand?"

"This is, indeed, kind of you."

"Kind! Nonsense, it is the end of my debt; after this we are quits, Master Bob, and it will be your turn to help me."

"Yes! if I only knew how, how gladly I would!" replied Robert, heartily.

"Well, well! the mouse helped the lion, you know. Who can't tell but that some day I may ask you to assist me; and now you may go into the billiard-room if you want a weed."

"Thank you, no, sir, I don't smoke."

"Never learnt the pernicious trick, eh?"

"I'm afraid I did, but I thought it was a bad example, so I left it off when I took holy orders. You cannot urge the men to give up beer and tobacco if you indulge in them yourself."

"But you are not a teetotaler?"

"No, I approve of a glass of wine or beer with your meals; that does no harm. It is the intermediate drinking which runs the men into mischief, not the half pint, or even pint with their dinners at home. It does not do to draw the rein too tightly. It may snap!"

"You're right, Bob. You will do the poor fellows more good by your sensible view of the case than some of your parish priests who wear so much starch in their neckcloths that they cannot turn their heads, and can scarcely one road, the one that they are travelling. And now tell me, is Horace fond of his work?"

"He does it well and conscientiously, sticks to it like a leech, but I don't think he would ever have chosen office work."

"Nor should I," chuckled the Baronet.

"He had better have turned parson, then he could have had the living of Winthorpe instead of you, Bob," and he gave the other a decided dig in the ribs. "Well, mind you are in the hall to hand Adela into the village cart, young man," he said, as he looked at his watch. "I have one or two things to see about before you start." And with a nod Sir Richard left the room.

At five minutes to three Robert Lake went into the hall, and began gazing at some of the valuable pictures hanging there, with eyes that saw nothing of their beauty.

"Hallo! youngster, you're all there, are

you?" called the Baronet, when he caught sight of him.

Robert laughed, in spite of himself.

"Yes! I'm quite all here, sir."

"Quite, eh! Are you sure about that, Master Bob?"

The other coloured, but had no time to answer, for the butler was coming along the hall, and the sound of wheels was approaching.

And soon after, Adela joined them, looking pale, but still beautiful, in her sable garments.

"Well, my dear, are you ready?" exclaimed the Baronet, taking down his hat and shaking himself leisurely into his dust coat. "Help Miss Thorndyke up, Lake; I'll be there directly," but at that moment a note was placed in his hands.

He sauntered to the carriage reading it, and looked up at Adela, without a smile.

"My dear," he said, "I cannot go with you after all; the news contained in this letter claims my immediate attention. However, poor Jenkins shall not suffer. Lake will drive you over; here is my purse, do what you think right for him, and I shall be quite satisfied, rest assured."

It was all done so naturally that a more suspicious girl than Adela might well have been deceived, and she certainly had not the remotest idea but that her old friend was going with her until suddenly prevented by some unexpected business matter.

"Cannot I wait for you?" she asked, kindly.

"No, my dear, I shall not be able to manage a drive to day; it will be best to keep to the arrangements we had made with only the change of charioteer, unless you would like to drive yourself, in which case I am sure Lake won't object."

"Not in the least," he said, readily.

"Then up you jump, sir; and Adela, remember, be back across the line before half-past four."

"Very well," she answered, with a smile, and away sped the spirited little pony as fast as his short legs could carry him. She had never driven him before, and she found him a very different animal to manage from "Peggy," her father's quiet, well-worked little quadruped, now grazing in the Rectory field.

"Fury's" mouth appeared to her to be uncommonly hard, and his pace seemed very fast after "Peggy's," but she enjoyed passing swiftly through the air, and he neither kicked nor shied, nor otherwise misbehaved himself.

A sudden turn in the road brought them to the line, and to Adela's astonishment the gates were closed across it, and before she could realize the danger, an express train dashed through.

In one moment "Fury" had twisted round like an eel, and was galloping home fast and excitedly, with his bit between his teeth.

She had kept her seat, but the place beside her was vacant.

CHAPTER XXI.

BOB LAKE'S WOOING.

It was all Adela could do to guide the terrified animal, who ran recklessly along the familiar road to the Hall. She had not lost her presence of mind, and was enabled to keep him clear of the sharp angles round which he rushed.

The entrance gates were fortunately open, and "Fury" flew up the drive, turning off for the stable-yard, where Sir Richard was standing talking to the head groom.

Suddenly, to his surprise, the man bolted from his side; he had caught a glimpse of the runaway pony through the trees.

He ran to the gate and shouted "wo!"

And "Fury" seemed to recognize his voice, for he slackened his pace, and the man was able to catch him by the rein, running by the side himself, and laying his weight upon the little creature's neck, while he spoke to him,

which helped to quiet him, so that they arrived in the stable-yard at a jog trot.

Sir Richard turned pale as he looked in Adela's white face, for in truth she had had her nerves at full tension so long that she was scarcely able to bear any extra strain upon them.

"In Heaven's name, what has happened, my dear?" he asked, in an agitated tone. "Have you met with any accident? What have you done with Lake?"

"That is the worst part of it, Sir Richard," returned the girl, anxiously. "I do not know what has become of Mr. Lake. We got on very well till we reached the line; and, of course, not expecting any train, I was not on the look-out for one, but no sooner had we got near the gates, than an express flew by; round whizzed 'Fury,' and all I know is that poor Robert no longer filled the place by my side, he must have been thrown out by the sudden jerk the pony gave. I had my work carved out to keep him to the road. As to pulling him up it was impossible; I believe he had the bit between his teeth."

"More than likely; he is perfectly quiet if you avoid trains as I told you, but if he once catches sight of one he's the devil—I beg your pardon, my dear!"

"Oh! I don't mind," returned Adela, with a smile; "but oh! Sir Richard, what if I have hurt or killed Horace's brother? I don't think either 'Fury' or the trap are injured."

"Not in the least, and we will hope the best about Bob Lake. Here, Johnston, take one of the men with you, and go and look after Mr. Lake; if he is all right he can jump up, and the man can walk home."

Johnston touched his hat respectfully, readjusted the pony's bit and bridle, and led him across the yard, then calling a light-made, active lad to his side, bade him fetch his hat and coat, and in less than two minutes "Fury" was retracing his steps down the drive, with a stronger hand on the reins than Adela's.

"My dear," said Sir Richard, with emotion, as he offered her his arm, "I can only thank Heaven that you are safe; had any harm overtaken you, Adela, it would have broken my old heart."

"Don't say that, dear friend, all things are fated, I believe; and if it had been my destiny to be killed, life does not hold so many joys that you need have regretted helping me accidentally over the borderland into a better," she answered sadly.

"My dear, don't talk so; it grieves me to see you so despondent."

"Does it? Then I will try and keep my feelings to myself."

"I can't understand about that train," remarked Sir Richard, irrelevantly. "None ought to have passed at that hour, it must have been a special. I would not have let you go that way on any account if I had not thought it was quite safe, you may be sure."

"I hope Mr. Lake is safe," said Adela, fervently. "I wonder I was not thrown out too, the jerk was so sudden."

"I trust so, indeed; he is a good young fellow."

"He is truly," she replied warmly. "If my dear father could have named his own successor I believe his choice would have fallen upon Robert Lake. He endeared himself to our beloved one so much by his kindness and unselfishness."

"I am glad," said the Baronet simply; "and now my dear if I were you I would keep this little matter from your poor mother; it would only upset her sadly, and do no good. Go into my study and rest awhile, and I will bring you the first news of the young man," and he led Adela in by the French window which opened upon the terrace, and placed her in his own easy chair.

Then he went into the dining-room, and secured a bottle of champagne and a glass, and some macaroons, and went back.

"You must drink Bob's good health, Adela," he remarked, as he sent the cork spinning to

the further end of the room with a loud report. "There! It is useless for you to say no, my dear; I know what is good for you far better than you do, and you will not vex me, I am certain."

He poured out the wine as he spoke and held the glass to her lips.

"You have had a nasty shake, child, and need picking up."

His words of thoughtfulness brought a rush of tears to her eyes.

"Don't be kind to me!" she said, in an agitated voice; "tell me I'm a silly, weak-minded creature. I try so—so hard not to break down, indeed I do."

"Never mind me, Adela, I could never think you anything but the best of girls whatever you may do, and tears are a relief sometimes."

He placed his arm about her, and laid her head upon his breast in a gentle, fatherly manner, and let her trouble have its way, and soon the sobs became fewer and fewer.

Then he made her drink down quickly a glass of the wine he had brought her, and placed her once more in his own chair, sitting beside and holding her hand, and talking to her in his own kind, strange way, until he heard the faint sound of wheels.

Then he went quietly out, and after a few minutes he returned with a smiling face, and a second glass in his hand.

"Bob's all right," he laughed. "He says you turned him out most neatly, and he's as lively as a cricket."

"Is he not hurt at all?" she asked, in a tone of relief.

"He has twisted his wrist a bit; he fell with his weight upon it, and he is a lucky fellow to have got off so cheaply."

"I am sorry about his wrist, but thankful it is no worse. Does he think it was my bad driving which caused the accident?"

"No, no, of course not. He thinks you showed great pluck, and so do I. It would have been all right but for that wretched train; as it is I am the person to blame for letting you drive that rascal, 'Fury.' If he had hurt you I should have had him shot, believe me!"

"I am glad he did not, for he is a pretty little fellow!"

"Handsome is as handsome does." If he can't behave himself I must find a pony who will."

"Oh! he went very nicely till he was frightened. Poor little wretch, I believe he was really scared."

"Yes, I have no doubt he thought his Satanic majesty was after him!" laughed Sir Richard.

"And no wonder; a train is really an awful-looking thing. If we did not understand it, we should be alarmed too, I expect."

"Don't make excuses for him, Dela; he ought to have got used to the sight by now. I'll have him turned into the field beside the line to punish him."

"That will be much better than shooting him, and will probably cure him in time."

"Now here comes Lake, Adela. You had better bandage up his wrist for him; and while I go and get you one from the house-keeper, you must give him some champagne, and keep him in countenance, my dear; for it is most unbecoming to make a man sip his wine alone, and here are some macaroons, I know you like them."

"What a memory you have!" she returned brightly, and he left the room as Bob Lake entered it.

"I am so thankful you were not more hurt!" said Adela, kindly, rising to meet him as he crossed the room.

"Never mind me," he said, earnestly. "I do hope the fright has not upset you, Adela?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I was rather cowardly," she replied, with a smile; "but I got home all right, and now I am thankful it is all over. Poor Jenkins! I am afraid he won't get his money to day."

"Yes he shall," said Sir Richard, entering

with the bandage. "We will go over in the barouche later in the afternoon. I shall be at leisure by then; you can go with us or not, Lake, as you like best when the time comes. Shall we say half-past five? That will give the ladies time for their afternoon tea, and me to get through my business," and he bustled off again at once.

"What a kind old man he is!" said Adela, softly.

"Indeed I ought to agree with you; he has done a great deal for me and Horace," he replied with feeling.

"Quite true," she returned, smiling; "and now I must obey his orders, and make you take some champagne, and have a little myself to bear you company;" and she suited the action to the word.

"I make it a rule not to take anything between meals," he laughed; "but this is a very especial occasion, so I don't think I'll say no, for I don't feel quite sure of my own identity; my head runs round a little."

"I'm so sorry," she said, regretfully.

"Are you really, Adela?" he asked, earnestly.

"Yes, really and truly," she returned heartily, "and I'm so afraid your wrist will cause you suffering. Finish your wine, and I will bandage it for you with cold water."

"I shall not mind the pain one straw if it causes you to think kindly of me," he began.

"Of course I think kindly of you," she replied, innocently, handing him the glass.

"Now, finish that up, and let me get to my work. I know how to pass a bandage, so you need not be afraid of my lack of skill." And she began with agile and light fingers to arrange it scientifically, so as to make it more comfortable.

"Is that easier?" she asked, smiling up at him.

"Adela, I would gladly suffer pain every day to have an angel like you to minister to me," he said in a low voice, taking her hand, and holding it firmly in his.

And something in the expression of his face kept her silent, much as she longed to laugh off his remark.

"Adela," he continued, fervently, "I cannot think how it is that I have not been your friend as Horace has been from childhood. I conclude it is because I went away to school, and he did not; at any rate, I have learnt to grudge him all the happy days which he has passed by your side."

"Tom and I used to laugh at him for his friendship for girls, but we were wrong. It has made him a more attractive, gentler fellow than we are, and I, for one, know what we have both lost. I seem somehow to have never really known you, Adela, notwithstanding all the years we have been acquainted, until I became your dear father's curate. Then my eyes were opened, and I saw what womanhood ought to be."

"From that time I vowed to try and be worthy of such a friend, and, Adela, I have gained your goodwill, but now that will not satisfy me. I have seen what a treasure you are, dear one, and is it strange that I should covet it for my own? I know I am not good enough for you, that you will have many better fellows at your feet, who can offer you richer homes, even titles; but darling, you will never find a man to love you more truly or fervently than I do, and the whole object and aim of my life shall be to make you happy, and to act and live as you would have me do."

"And now, Adela, I can have the joy, not only of asking you to be my wife, and allow me the privilege of protecting you from the cares of life, but I can offer you back the home you love, and have loved so long; and darling, your mother will have a hearty welcome there. I should never wish to part you from her. She does not dislike me, I am sure, and one day she may learn to lean on me as though I were her own son. Adela, my dear girl, may I hope for your love?"

She held up her hands with a pathetic gesture.

"Oh, hush!" she murmured, "I never thought of this, Bob, never!"

"Think of it now, dearest; I will not be impatient. I fancied you must have felt, must have known my devotion, but if I have been too abrupt, if I have startled you, I can wait. Only let me have hope that by-and-by your decision will be in my favour. Adela, think of it. I have woven you into all my schemes for doing good; all my thoughts and plans for dear old Winsthorpe seem centred in you; help me to bring them to perfection. Without you I shall be but a one-handed man!" he said, with emotion.

Adela covered her eyes with her hands. She could not bear to look into his young, pleading face, and know that she must bring the shadow of disappointment upon it.

She would have closed her ears to his earnest words, as she had shut her eyes, had it been possible, for each one went to her heart with a cruel pain.

He asked her to carry on with him her dear father's work, and it seemed to her as though his dear voice joined Bob Lake's, and urged it also.

Her mother too! She could secure her the home to which she was so deeply attached.

She fairly groaned.

"Oh! Bob!" she answered with real sorrow upon her speaking face, "what could make you think of such a thing? You and Horace are like brothers to me. How could we be anything else?"

"I can never be a brother to you, Adela," he returned gently. "I love you with a very different sort of feeling to that. Darling, tell me you will be my wife; let me try and make you your once bright self again."

"Oh! never, never!" she moaned. "I can never again be that."

"Then I will uncomplainingly share your sadness, dear one."

"Bob, put the idea from your mind," she returned firmly, but gently. "It can never be."

"Do not say so, dear girl; think before you decide. My avowal was unexpected, by-and-by you will see things in a different light."

"Never, Bob!"

"Oh! Adela, you will break my heart," he said, with a bitter cry. "You cannot realise the disappointment you are causing me."

"Nor you, my friend, the way you are tempting me to do wrong. Bob, if I could only say I loved you, or even that I might grow to love you, I might accept the life I should prefer to any other which could be offered me. I might ensure my mother comparative happiness, and feel that my dear father was looking down with joy at my choice."

"And feeling all this, you say no?" asked Bob in surprise.

"Yes! I say no; I can say nothing else."

"Am I then so utterly obnoxious to you?" he cried with bitter reproach.

"Don't, don't, dear old Bob; if I had a brother I could scarcely love him better than I do you; but even as you could never care for me as though I were your sister, so I can never feel for you as a woman should do for her husband; and without such love on both sides, believe me, life together would be living death!"

"Am I to shut away all hope then?" he asked.

"Do, there's a dear fellow; it is useless to hope for the unattainable."

"Adela, what is your future to be?"

"I often ask myself the same question. I hardly see, myself at present, but I think I could write, if I could get my works taken, and with the little we have we might manage."

He turned from her abruptly.

"I cannot bear it!" he exclaimed passionately; "the thought that you are going to fight the battle of life alone is too much for me. My dear one, if you could but make up

your mind to let me try and give you happiness—"

She stopped him.
"My good old Bob, you only give me pain; the world holds but one man who could have commanded my love."

"And he?"
"Did not think it worth the having," she said bitterly. "I know what are your feelings, Bob—oh, so well!—and I feel for you most keenly, but I cannot change, any more than you can; the cases are parallel."

"Not so; he is not worthy of one thought, Adela, while you—I should like to have his punishment in my hands."

She looked up at the tall slight youth, and smiled.

"I don't think you could do much against him," she said.

"Right is might," he answered. "I wish I could have the chance."

"You must not think ill of him, Bob; I love him still."

He shrank from her words.

"I did not mean to pain you," she said, gently, as she laid her hand upon his arm; "and you must not pain me! I cannot bear to hear him harshly spoken of."

Then Bob rose. All the light had died out of his bright young face—all the joy seemed to have passed out of his life.

"If you say my day dream must be at an end, Miss Thorndyke, I must obey you; but not to love you is beyond my power. There will never be a mistress to Winthrop Rectory."

"Nonsense, Bob! You are too young to speak like that."

"Am I younger than you are?"

"No; but men are different to women. Love is a woman's life; a man's pastime."

"You will find when your hair is grey, Adela, that my love is unchanged; and remember, in all the years to come, it is yours if you will accept it; and remember, too, that there is a home ever ready for you, and loving arms wherein to shelter, should you find the world too cold and unsympathetic. My dear girl, may Heaven bless you, and keep you from all sorrow."

Then he took her hands in his, and holding them tightly, looked into her sad eyes; and the pain in his so troubled her that she could not answer him one word; and he turned from her with bent head. The door shut, and she was alone.

(To be continued.)

EXERCISE FOR INSOMNIA.—If you are not accustomed to walking, be careful not to become fatigued. So many women who wish to overcome their nervousness by the inhalation of fresh air and by exercise overdo the matter, and their last state is almost worse than the first. They walk until completely tired out, and return home exhausted, having received no benefit, and then resolve that exercise is a delusion and a snare. A gentleman who was suffering from a complication of troubles which induced extreme nervousness, but which were not of a sort to confine her to her bed, came to the city for treatment by one of our celebrated specialists. She had insomnia; could only sleep under the influence of chloral; was unable to take any exercise, and had become utterly despondent. The physician told her she must take regular exercise in the open air. The patient declared it was impossible for her to walk. She could scarcely move about the house. The doctor, however, told her she must go out and walk if it were only just to the end of the street, but she must not tire herself. This advice was followed reluctantly. The first day two streets were accomplished; the second twice the distance; at the end of a week the patient found no difficulty in walking half-a-mile in the park, after riding thither in the omnibus. The regular exercise soon enabled the sufferer to sleep well, and her general health was re-established.

WILD ASTERS.

—O—

The glamour of gold on the flaunting ferns
Brightens the woodways, winding where
The hectic red of the autumn burns
On oak, hedge-myrtle, and maple fair;
And all in a dingle, leafy boughed,
Sweet Queen Marguerite rules in state;
And out of the coverts her courtiers crowd,
And the lady gorses upon her wait.

With royal blazons the golden rod
Flames in the van of her retinue;
And the princely plumes of the sumac nod
With the spears of the bind-weed, mauve
and blue;

And we hear in the thickets' tangled ways
The mellow boom of the pheasant's drum,
And the shrill, small fife of the cricket plays,
And we know that autumn has surely come.

And far above us, in zigzag lines,
The white battalions of wild fowl strain
From the ghostly zone of the Northern pines
For the glowing isles of the South again.
And, O, for the glory of summer lost,
And the grace of the spring to be, my queen;
There are wild incursions of wind and frost,
And the savage hordes of the North between.

O, Marguerite, under the crimsoning bough
Holding levee in magnificent state,
Drink your fill of the sunshine now,
While the rains delay and the rude winds
wait,

For, fair queen-regnant of alder glade,
Born in the purple of autumn days,
Your royal honours will fall and fade
When the frost lies white on the woodland
ways. E. A. B.

IVY'S PERIL.

—O—

CHAPTER IV.

How very well this world of ours would get on if people did not continually take a delight in interfering with what did not in the least concern them!

I suppose this reflection has come to most of us at times, and it was destined to come to Ivy Carew very early in the course of her engagement.

She was only nineteen. She did not know the dark shadows which clouded her mother's life.

She had but misty recollections of something sad and troublesome which happened when she was a little child; but she had grown up in her pleasant adopted home, having her own way in all things, her will never crossed, and with but two precepts instilled into her heart, namely, that money alone cannot bring happiness, and that anything which needs to be concealed is of necessity wrong.

These did not form a very weighty code of moral instruction, but they supplied the foundation of Ivy's character. She grew up true and open-hearted, frank and sincere, without the slightest touch of arrogance or faith in the power of her own wealth.

It was hardly surprising, considering the way her education had been conducted, that Miss Carew entertained no fears of Sir John's consenting to receive Mr. Beresford as her lover.

Paul Beresford was an avowed favourite at Southlands. The Baronet had been heard to say any father might be proud of such a son. Lady Fortescue liked him cordially. Both had admitted him to great intimacy, so Ivy felt safe.

The only fault they could bring against her lover was his lack of wealth, and people who always preached from the text "Money can't

bring happiness" were hardly likely to object on that score.

Miss Carew had not frittered her heart away in countless flirtations and passing fancies. She was a girl of deep, strong affections, but few called them out.

The love she gave to Paul had the freshness of a girl's first attachment, and the fervour of a woman's love.

He was her prince, her hero. It would have been impossible for her to forget him, even had he left St. Arran's and "made no sign," and now that he had spoken, that she had a right to own her affection before all the world, no human powers would have induced Ivy Carew to forsake the man who had saved her life.

"I think they will be pleased," she whispered to Paul, as they walked up the avenue, whose leaves strewn the ground. "Aunt always liked you, and Uncle John often sings your praises."

Beresford stopped suddenly, and caught her hand.

"But what if they refuse?"

The girl's face paled.

"They could not. They have never denied me anything since I came here; and, besides, I know they like you."

He hesitated.

"I think they do; but, Ivy, I have a strange presentiment of evil. My darling, humour my whim, foolish as it may seem to you, and answer me. What if they refuse?"

She clung just a little closer to his arm.

"It will make no difference."

"You would be true to me against even their opposition?"

"I would be true to you against the world!"

"My darling!"

"I don't know much about business," said Miss Carew, gravely; "I don't feel at all sure if I vexed Uncle John whether he could not keep all the money; but you would not mind that?"

"Not at all. I am to have three hundred a year; and a great many people marry on less. You would not mind being poor?"

"Not with you."

"And I would work hard for you, my darling; I would think no toil too great undertaken for your dear sake. Besides, Ivy, there is just a chance I may be rich myself some day. My father never talked much of his family, but he told me once it was just possible I might succeed to a fortune some day, and that was why he made me see the world instead of living always with him."

"But I thought you had no relations, Paul?"

"None that I ever heard of; but my father always said his family had cast him off because of my mother. He used to think some day they might hold out the olive branch to me. He always told me never to forget I came of a grand old race. I have his Greek testament now, Ivy, with his name in it—'Claude Beresford, gentleman.' My poor father! he never forgot in his humble Italian home what his origin had been."

"I should like to see it, Paul."

"You shall some day, sweetheart. Ivy, I feel brave now, for you have promised to be mine, whatever happens."

"In life, in death," quoted the girl, softly.

They were a handsome couple as they walked up the avenue. Lady Fortescue standing at the drawing-room window thought she had never seen a more charming pair. Sir John was with her.

"Can she have sent away Carrington for him?" asked the Baronet of his wife. "I never thought of such a thing before, but I must say it looks like it."

"He is worthy even of Ivy."

"I always liked him!"

By which it really sounds as though Mr. Beresford's wooing would be an easy task. The blush on Ivy's face, the eager light in Paul's eyes, told their own story even before he said to Sir John,—

"Will you give her to me, sir? I have

nothing in the world to offer her but love; but if only you will let me hope I will work hard till I make a position worthy of her."

Sir John smiled. He had been young, and made a love match himself. He forgot Mr. White's suggestions about a duke, and remembered the misery that had come to Ivy's mother through wedding where her heart was not; in fact, he acted the part of a most benignant guardian, and assured Paul that, subject to the result of certain inquiries which he doubted not would be satisfactory, Ivy had her uncle's permission to please herself.

"As to toiling hard to make a position for her, my dear boy," said the old man, kindly; "I don't think it will be at all necessary. Carew is a large property, and its master will find quite enough duties to fill a great portion of his time there. With your literary tastes and political talents I don't think you will find a little leisure difficult to dispose of. I really believe the 'toiling hard' had better not be undertaken."

Nothing definite was settled, save that there was to be no opposition; a very delightful evening followed. Ivy and her lover often looked back to it often with tender regret, and wondered why no instinct had warned them their happiness was too great to last.

The next day was Saturday, and on the Monday Paul had arranged to go up to London and enter on the duties of his new appointment.

Sir John thought under the new circumstances he could postpone his journey, but Ivy liked his resolution, that his word passed to his new employers he ought not to break it.

"I expect you'll very soon break with them entirely?" said Sir John, laughing. "An insurance office, isn't it? Well, the hours are light, that's one thing. When we come up to London we shall be able to see a great deal of you!"

"And I may come to-morrow?" said the lover, looking at Lady Fortescue so appealingly that she forthwith gave him an invitation to come over after breakfast, and stay till the exigencies of his new appointment forced him to start for London.

"That's a nice young fellow," said Sir John later on, when he was alone with his wife. "Perhaps the child might have done better, but I'm not at all sorry she has chosen Paul."

"And I am very glad."

"I wonder what White will say?"

Lady Fortescue started. The millionaire and his sister were decidedly in her good graces, but there were times when she hardly relished the remarkable influence the former had acquired over her husband.

"What does it matter?"

"My dear Lucy, he is a very sensible man; in fact, I may say a most suitable man. I hope he will not think I have been rash!"

"It is no business of his."

"Pardon me, my dear, it is a great business of his! He introduced young Beresford to us, remember!"

"I think the young man's saving Ivy's life was the first introduction."

"But for Mr. White he wouldn't have been in the neighbourhood to save it. I consider White answerable for Beresford's presence here, and I sincerely hope he may be able to answer satisfactorily the questions I shall be bound to put to him."

"You said you had no doubt just now."

"Well, hardly any. You see, Lucy, there is always a risk where one knows nothing of a young man's family."

"Mr. Beresford told us his father's story the first time he ever came here."

"And very romantic it was; but, Lucy, it does seem strange he has no relations."

"Has Ivy any relations except ourselves?" retorted Lady Fortescue.

"No; and that proves my theory. When anyone is peculiarly destitute of family ties there is usually something discreditable in their family history."

"Jack!"

"My dear wife, can you deny it? Don't you know that strangers would consider poor Ivy's mother a —"

But his wife's sobs stopped him; he did not speak the cruel word.

"That is one reason why I am glad of this," said Lady Fortescue, when she grew calmer. "Of course Paul will have to know, but I am sure it will make no difference to him."

"And I suppose they may as well be married next summer."

"Why not sooner?"

"My dear, I thought you would never bear to part from Ivy?"

"But you told me the sooner she was married the better. You know, Jack, we have often said she would never really be safe from that man until she was a married woman."

"But he is dead. White saw his funeral."

"What inquiries do you mean to make, John? I can't see the use of any."

"I only want some one to vouch for the young fellow's own story, that he had a father who lived the life of a recluse in Italy, and died there years ago, and that his own life has been blameless and upright."

"That won't be difficult."

The household at Meadow View had retired to rest before Paul returned, and though he tried to secure a private interview with Mr. White before breakfast he failed; his great news was still untold when the trio sat down to their repast.

"By the way, Beresford," said the millionaire, pleasantly; "do you mind answering my letters for the last time? I am obliged to go out this morning early, and there are quite a score to be written for the first post."

It would have been impossible to refuse without seeming churlish and ungrateful, for he owed his fresh appointment—nay, even his friendship—with the Fortescues, and his introduction to Ivy to Mr. White. It put out Paul's plans considerably, but he assented at once, only supplementing his reply by a petition for a few moments' private conversation with his recent chief before the latter started.

"I am going to feed the peacock," said Mrs. Austin, with her metallic laugh; "so you can get your private conversation over here."

Paul felt his courage oozing out at his fingers' ends. It had been far easier to ask Sir John for his niece than to tell Mr. White that he had asked, and not been refused.

The millionaire watched him keenly, with rather an amused smile.

"Is there anything the matter?" he said at last. "You seem down this morning?"

"I am anything but that. The fact is, sir, I am engaged to be married."

"Good gracious!"—and Mr. White looked very much astonished. "You do surprise me. Some old attachment, I suppose; and you've been waiting for better prospects to carry it through. Well, three hundred a year won't provide luxuries; but if the young lady's prudent you may have a very cosy home on it."

This was terrible. Paul had been quite prepared to be rebuked for his presumption in aspiring to Ivy; but that Mr. White would regard her as so thoroughly out of his reach, as never even to suspect her identity with Paul's betrothed, was too galling.

"I'm sure I congratulate you," said the millionaire warmly. "And if Mrs. Austin and I can be of any use to you with our experience when it comes to furnishing and such like, I hope you'll tell us. We haven't always been rich, you know, and Janetta and I can make a pound go as far as most people."

"You are very kind," said Paul, trying hard to recognise the good feeling, and not take offence; "but I don't think you quite understand. I proposed to Miss Carew yesterday, and was accepted."

Mr. White's face underwent no manner of change. He thumbed with the fingers of his left hand on the table in a manner truly

exasperating to Paul's nerves, but he betrayed neither surprise, vexation, or pleasure.

"Won't you congratulate me, sir?" said the ex-secretary, determined to keep his temper if possible.

"I will congratulate her," said the millionaire affably. "I have seen a good deal of you, Beresford, and I am convinced you would do your utmost to make any woman happy. I regard Sir John's niece as a most fortunate young lady."

This was highly complimentary Paul began to believe; both he and Ivy had misjudged the millionaire.

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure," he said simply. "And Sir John is going to make inquiries respecting my antecedents from you. I hope you will do your best for me, Mr. White."

"I'll tell him I had a daughter or a younger sister I'd give her to you with pleasure. As to your antecedents, Beresford, I don't know anything about them. You had excellent testimonials as a private secretary, and I can endorse them all. But of your family history I know nothing."

"There is very little to know, sir. I believe my grandfather made a fortune at the Antipodes, and brought up my father to no profession. He took honours at Oxford, and then turned his attention to art; but for my mother's early death, and his own absorbing grief for her, I think he would have made himself famous."

"Ah!"

"My father's name is on the records of his college, and his memory is still cherished in the place where all his later years were spent."

"And your grandfather?"

"My grandfather!"

"The gentleman who made his fortune at the Antipodes?"

"He died before I was born. My father's marriage offended him, and he never spoke to him afterwards. Indeed, there was some legacy he meant to have left him, which he declared forfeited, and my father never had."

"What became of it?"

"I have no idea."

"Then you don't expect it to come to you?"

Paul flushed.

"I know that my father had some faint expectation of riches and honours that might come to us some day. He often told me I might have to take my place among the county families of England."

"You will do so if you marry Miss Carew, decidedly."

"Do not say *if*!" pleaded Paul. "She has promised to be my wife. Even if Sir John rescinds his consent we could be parted only for a time; in less than two years Ivy will be her own mistress."

"I can't fancy Sir John playing the part of domestic tyrant. Well, I shall see him in the course of the morning, and I promise you I'll do my best for you, young man."

The millionaire went into the garden, and joined his sister, who was feeding the peacock. She had evidently expected him, for she looked up inquiringly.

"Well!"

"It isn't well—it's bad. He's been and done the very thing I feared."

"And got expelled from Southlands for his pains."

"On the contrary. He's received there as bridegroom-elect."

Mrs. Austin bit her lip.

"What a nuisance."

"My dear Janetta, do try and be a little original; any ordinary woman could say that. Now you are different."

"It will be difficult."

"But not impossible."

"Not at all. We may have to hasten matters, that's all."

"When is the Australian mail in?"

"Next week."

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"Couldn't be better."
"I suppose not. Now what am I to do—
oppose or congratulate?"
"The latter, decidedly."

"But—"
"You will congratulate, of course. That
girl has doubts—very slight ones, I admit, but
still doubts. Stop at nothing in your efforts
to win her confidence."

"And then—"
"Tell Sir John that, admirably suited as the
young couple are, hasty marriages seldom turn
out well."

"Shall I stipulate for a year's engage-
ment?"

"No; you would lose all. Tell him Paul
Beresford will be set down as a fortune-
hunter if he marries too suddenly, and that it
is a great injustice to the office that has en-
gaged his services for him to leave under six
months."

"That brings it to April."

"The end of April. No girl would ever con-
sent to be married in May. You see it gives
us till the beginning of June."

White turned away his head with a half-
groan.

"I wish there was no cause for it," he cried,
suddenly. "I wish we had stayed in London,
and never come near this place."

"We can go back," she retorted, sullenly.
"If that is what you want we can undo the
work of years in a few hours by returning to
London—and beggary."

"We can not undo all," he said, slowly, and
his face had a strange, eager, pitiful look
on it. "There are some things no regret, no re-
morse, can alter."

"What a coward you are, George, or has
anything upset you? I declare you look like a
sheet!"

"I am not well."
Mrs. Austin laughed.

"I wish I could do your part, and you
mine. I never have scruples, hesitations, or
regrets; and as for remorse, why, George, I
don't know the meaning of the word."

It was perfectly true—she did not.

George White shuddered. This woman was
his pupil; she had once been young and inno-
cent, tender and true. What she was he had
made her; now, when the pupil far surpassed
her master, he was well-nigh terrified at the
result of his own handiwork.

"Hush!" he said quickly; "don't talk like
that. I can't bear to hear you."

"Why not?"

"You are a woman, and—"

"And women should know no evil, pretty
dears. They should sit like dressed-up dolls in
gilded boudoirs, and do crewel work; they
should think of their children, their servants,
and housekeeping, and know of no worse
crime than cook's impertinence, no worse
trouble than baby's teething. That's your
idea of a model woman; isn't it, George?"

"You would never have been like that," he
said simply; "it is not in you."

"No," and she put one hand to her heart
as though she felt a sudden pain there. "I
should never have been like that. I wanted a
wider, freer life. I wanted to live, not to exist;
but George, I shouldn't have been what I am
but for you. I couldn't have spent my days
making puddings and doing crewel work. I
should have wanted more to fill my life than
that, but I might have been a woman but for
you."

"What are you now?" he asked abruptly,
"if you are not a woman."

"I sometimes think a fiend! There," in her
natural voice, as the clock chimed ten, "you
had better be going over to Southlands
now."

"And—"

"Take what part you please; yield to these
new-found scruples, this new-born remorse, if
it seems good to you; I shall not reproach you.
We have stuck to each other through many
things, George; now I leave it to you whether
we sink or swim—only let it be together."

He stooped and kissed her on the forehead,

and left her without another word; and she,
turning towards the house, looked herself in
her own room and sat down to think over the
secret of her life—a secret which had its begin-
ning well-nigh twenty years before, and which
had tended more than ought else to make her
what she was. There were many cruel deeds,
many wicked wrongs, on Janetta's conscience;
but the first step in the history of those nine-
teen years—which, in fact, entailed all those
crimes and wicked wrongs—had not been
hers. In the beginning at least she was not to
blame for them—she had been not sinning, but
sinned against.

The millionaire had fully recovered his
everyday composure when he reached South-
lands. Instead of going the library he asked
for the ladies, and was shown into the presence
of Miss Carew and her aunt.

His first greeting was to Ivy. Taking her
hand in his he wished her joy, telling her, in
simple, well-chosen words, of his great regard
for her *fiancé*, and how he could have wished
no greater happiness for a child of his own
than to pass her life under Paul Beresford's
loving charge.

Miss Carew was surprised at his manner.
She began to reproach herself for having
thought unkindly of him.

"Mr. Beresford will be here in time for
dinner," said the millionaire, addressing Lady
Fortescue. "He has one or two little matters
to attend to before he finally leaves Meadow
View, and now that I have made my feli-
citations in person, I will go and find Sir John,
for I have a great deal of business to discuss
with him to-day." And so saying, he departed
for the library, leaving the aunt and niece
with tenderer feelings towards him than any
they had ever felt before.

"I'm thankful to see you, White," began
Sir John, as soon as they had shaken hands.
"Young Beresford may have told you of his
proposals for Ivy. I like the young man, and I
consented of hand; but I've been wondering
ever since how I possibly could have been so
rash. You see I know nothing of him—absol-
utely nothing."

"I beg your pardon, Sir John, but I think
you know a great deal. You have my word
for his admirable conduct ever since he has
been an inmate of my family, and for his
conscientious discharge of all the duties he
undertook."

Sir John felt snubbed, as only yesterday
Mr. White had declared Ivy worthy of a
duke. He had expected a little friendly re-
monstrance for giving his niece to a penni-
less demented man; but the millionaire seemed
to have gone over completely to the lovers' side.

"But I know nothing of his family."
"His father was a scholar and a gentleman.
Oxford is justly proud of him. His grand-
father made a fortune in Australia, which is
nothing to his discredit."

"Not at all; but—"

"My dear Sir John, do be frank with me.
I can see that you are troubled about some-
thing. Do tell me what doubt has arisen in
your mind respecting my young friend, Beres-
ford?"

"None at all; only most people blame me
for giving the heiress of the Carews to a man
no one knows."

Mr. White laughed.

"It's no business of anyone's!"

"But," the grievance was coming out now;
"it's perfectly ridiculous. There'll be nobody
to come to the wedding. Ivy has no relations
but Lady Fortescue and myself, while Beres-
ford has none at all!"

"So much the better for him, Sir John.
Surely you will not let such an absurd scruple
interfere with your niece's happiness?"

"Well, not as you put it! I suppose I
must let my wife have her way, and plan a
grand wedding after Christmas."

Mr. White looked scandalized.

"I beg your pardon, Sir John, but that would,
indeed, be a fatal mistake."

"Why?"

"You have a perfect right to allow your
niece to marry whom she pleases, but under
the peculiar circumstances a hasty wedding
would be most disastrous for the future of
the young couple."

"Why? You said you'd trust Beresford
with a girl of your own!"

"So I would!"

"And Ivy is not changeable—a girl who
knows her own mind."

"I cannot explain my meaning, Sir John;
I might offend you."

"You must explain it!" said Sir John,
haughtily. "I insist upon it, Mr. White. As
for offence I'm not a man to take any without
cause."

Mr. White looked into the fire, and gave his
explanation slowly, as a man who fears it will
be unwelcome.

"If Miss Carew were married in haste to
anyone—even to a peer of England—the un-
kind tongues of those who recollect her
mother's story would make the cruel com-
ment that you hurried on the match, lest the
bridegroom should hear any rumour of what
took place in Rome nineteen years ago."

It was pitiful to see the change in Sir John's
face—all the glad hopefulness died out of it.
He looked as one smitten with a sudden dread.

"I thought no one knew."

"No one knows. A good many people had
grave suspicions at the time."

"I paid hundreds to purchase silence. I
knew no whisper of the scandal has ever
reached my wife or Ivy!"

"And it never will if you are only reason-
ably careful. Announce Miss Carew's engage-
ment in the usual way, and let a certain time
elapse between the news and the wedding.
Say six months. The whole world will know
then you fear nothing, and argue from that
the old scandal was groundless; and after all,
Sir John, when a girl is under twenty it is no
great hardship to her to have her marriage
postponed six months."

"No!"

"It would be fairer, too, to Paul. You
could let him fulfil his engagement at the
"Security" for six months, and it would give
the young people time to be better acquainted.
No one can blame you, if, though giving your
full and entire consent to the engagement, you
yet require it to last a certain time before you
allow the wedding-day to be fixed."

"What a sensible man you are, White! Of
course, that is the proper way to act, and I
shall certainly take your advice!"

"And now I want your advice!" said the
millionaire, pleasantly; "for I am in a bit of
a dilemma. You know those Delonda gold
mines which are making our fortunes?"

Sir John knew them perfectly since he had
invested in them pretty freely. He hoped
there was no bad news concerning them.

"Bad news! The best imaginable, but the
affair is getting too stupendous! It is really
needful someone should go out with full au-
thority to treat with the capitalists, who are
anxious to get a share in our riches. The
committee on the spot are all business men,
but they really need someone from home
with power to control them. I only wish I
could go myself!"

"And can't you?"

"I? Impossible, my dear Sir John! The
Delonda gold mines are but one iron, and I
have quite a dozen in the fire. But for the
news of Miss Carew's engagement I had a
little plan to propose to you which would
have settled everything, but now I suppose it
is out of the question!"

"Ivy's engagement will make no difference
to my business plans," said Sir John, full of
curiosity. "What was your project, Mr
White?"

"Why, since of all the directors of the
Delonda company you are the only one who
combines shrewd common sense, authority,
and power to leave England, I had meant to
propose your going to Sydney to settle this
affair in person."

"To Sydney!" said poor Sir John, who



[“IVY, I FEEL BRAVE NOW, FOR YOU HAVE PROMISED TO BE MINE, WHATEVER HAPPENS.”]

had woeful reminiscences of his last—and only—absence from England, when Captain Carew's death called him to Rome.

“Oh, it's much too far.”

“Perhaps,” said White, indifferently; “but it would be a pleasant expedition for anyone with plenty of money and time. The present steamers give all the comforts of a first-class hotel; one hears nothing but but familiar English, and never has to struggle under French phrases or German words; then Sydney is one of the finest climates in the world. Just when people at home are enjoying ice and snow the Australians revel in summer. Upon my word, Sir John, if ever I had your leisure I should have jumped at the idea of a voyage to the Antipodes. It would have been a charming trip, too, for your wife and Miss Carew; but, of course, the young lady has other things to think of now.”

Was it possible that the millionaire knew Sir John's extreme objection to an English winter? Could he have heard the Baronet declare (which he did about once a week directly it became cold) that if it were not for the miseries of speaking a foreign language he would go to Nice every year on the first of October and not return till the first of May? If he had he could not have put his schemes before Sir John in more glowing colours.

The Baronet looked up quite hopefully at the mention of “no ice and snow.”

“And I suppose they live like Christians out there, White? No foreign this and that, and things cooked up till one doesn't know what one's eating?”

“Good plain joints, the finest mutton in the world, and splendid poultry.”

“Ah! What a pity Ivy has settled her affairs so suddenly! These troubles in Sydney would have been a delightful trip for all of us.”

“And quite have relieved Lady Fortescue of her cough. I noticed this morning that it was getting worse. I expect these east winds don't suit your wife, Sir John.”

The millionaire refused to stay to lunch, and departed before Beresford arrived, having said not a single word in disparagement of his ex-secretary, and yet having amply accomplished his own ends.

And this brings us back to the sentiment with which this chapter opened—how remarkably well this world would get on without interference.

But for Mr. White's officiousness Miss Carew would have become Mrs. Beresford in January, and beyond an occasional lament over the cold when the wind was in the east Sir John and Lady Fortescue would have endured a winter at home with profound equanimity; but the millionaire's visit stirred up all the Baronet's longings for sunny skies and warm air, and the result of his interference was that Sir John refused to listen to any talk of the wedding before June.

Only Lady Fortescue openly regretted this. To Paul, after weeks of hopeless love, to know his darling might come to him in the next summer was joy too great for words.

Sir John's decision that there must elapse quite half a-year before the wedding day was fixed seemed to him quite pardonable; and Ivy, when she heard they were soon going up to London, where she could see her lover every day, was far too happy to lament that January's proposed ceremony must wait till July.

Only Aunt Lucy felt a strange, vague sorrow. She loved Ivy intensely; but so had she loved her sister Nell. If an affection had been powerless to save poor ill-fated Mrs. Carew would it be sufficient to save her daughter?

“Save her from what?” cried Sir John, when the question was propounded to him by Lucy with many tears. “Ivy's all right, and the picture of happiness.”

“But something might happen.” This was about a week after her engagement.

Paul was settled in London, and Ivy had

well-nigh grown used to the sight of a hoop of pearls on her left hand.

“I tell you what it is,” said Sir John, decidedly, “I'm sure you're not well, Lucy, or you'd not be so gloomy. If you go on like this I shall accept Mr. White's proposal to go and look after the Delonda mines, and whisk you all off to Sydney till summer comes back.”

A dead silence. The threat seemed awful to Ivy, then busy with a letter from her lover. Having altered his mind, Sir John took up his own correspondence; but before he had read one letter through his face grew pale as death, tears glittered in his kindly eyes, and he turned to his wife, exclaiming,—

“My dear, we shall have to go to Australia, whether we like it or not. Just read that letter.”

And Lady Fortescue took up the sheet, and read it with eager eyes. Only Ivy, utterly preoccupied with Paul's loving words, little guessed how nearly her destiny was affected by that missive from Australia.

(To be continued.)

WHEN once the desire of making money outside and in excess of the need of spending it take possession of a man and becomes his ideal of happiness, he has abandoned all chance of the reality. He will never have enough—never! The desire of wealth is like that of fame, of place. Get to the top of the near peak, which seems to you to be the ultimate of your ambition, and which, when won, will land you on the pinnacle of your hope, and you will find that others, still higher and farther, will reveal themselves before you as points to be gained. If you do not gain them, then have all your previous successes been in vain, and you are relatively no better off than when you began.



[THE MOONBEAMS REVEALED TO HER VIEW THE FIGURE OF A MAN RESTING AGAINST THE LAWN GATE.]

NOVELLETTE.]

ALL FOR LOVE.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

"Do come, dear, before Christmas! I have so much to prepare, so much to talk to you about, and it will be so nice to be all to ourselves before the house gets full, which is sure to be the case then, mamma saying it is the last Christmas I shall be at home; for you know I am to be married the beginning of the new year, when Jack Ducerne returns from Australia; for I must tell you our home is to be in Sydney; and Jack, oh! he is the nicest, dearest fellow, and I am sure you will like him."

Thus Marguerite Murray wrote to her bosom friend and former schoolfellow, Alma Duncan, with whom she had exchanged confidences since the day they first entered Madame Duprez's select establishment for young ladies, their friendship continuing long after they had for the last time turned their backs on Elliot House, having completed their education under Madame's supervision; and Marguerite closed the letter with many assurances of eternal friendship and girlish love, when, with her fair, rounded chin resting on her hands, she fell into a train of thought, her soft, brown eyes fixed on the envelope which she had a few seconds before addressed.

"Some one is walking over my grave," she said, with a smile, whilst an involuntary shiver passed through her frame. "I never did believe in presentiments," she continued, "but a strange dread of coming evil seems to enwrap me like a shroud;" when, rising from her seat, she endeavoured to shake off the feeling which had taken possession of her, as a servant entered the room.

"Please, miss, there's a woman below wants to see you, a Mrs. Johnson, and she says she has come a long way."

"Did mamma see her, Jordan?" Marguerite asked, in a tone which conveyed to the girl that her young mistress did not want her visitor's presence to be known to the other members of the household.

"No, miss," was the reply, in a subdued voice. "She said her business was urgent and private, so I didn't let your ma know anything about it until I had been to you."

"Quite right, Jordan, don't do so now." And there was a pleading in the brown eyes which did not escape the notice of the latter, when, in obedience to Marguerite's orders, she turned to escort Mrs. Johnson to the presence of the latter.

Marguerite was an only child, and it was three years now since she and Jack had first exchanged vows of such love as was to bind their hearts and lives together for ever and for aye; but the former was her father's idol, and an heiress, for Mr. Murray was a rich merchant, whose sole aim was to amass wealth for the daughter whom he so fondly loved; and when his wife first told him of Maggie's engagement to Jack Ducerne, it seemed too heavy a blow to be realized to all the hopes he had cherished that one day his beautiful girl would make a brilliant match.

Jack was a good fellow enough, he said, and he liked his frank, open-hearted ways; but further than being the heir to his father's extensive sheep-walks in Australia, what prospects had he to offer his peerless daughter? Therefore, exacting a promise that they should allow two or three years to elapse, in which each would be at liberty to answer the dictates of their hearts, when coming in closer contact with the world in which they lived, Jack was dismissed, not unkindly, but with an implied belief that he would not during those three years endeavour to exert his influence over the affections of Marguerite.

For the first few months succeeding his banishment (as she termed it) the latter was inconsolable; and then came an invitation,

which was only too gladly accepted by the parents, that she should visit a maiden aunt, her mother's sister, living in a western suburb of London; and Marguerite, apparently caring little where she went or what became of her, availed herself of Miss Everson's invitation.

At the commencement of her visit she was listless and apathetic, taking little interest in the amusements her aunt proposed for her pleasure, but one day a change appeared to have taken possession of her, and she became as light-hearted as she had hitherto been low and desponding; giving, as a reason, her having accidentally met Alma Duncan, an old schoolfellow, after which she would frequently absent herself from Myrtle Lodge, when Miss Jackson was in the enjoyment of her afternoon siesta, only too happy in the thought that at last Marguerite had met with someone able to arouse her from her apathy.

On one of these occasions Alma happened to call when the latter was absent, a circumstance which caused her aunt no little anxiety, from the fact that although her friend waited until the warm summer afternoon gradually glided away, and she was forced to leave without seeing her, Marguerite did not return, and when she did she made no mention of not having seen the very one she ostensibly went to meet, and when the fact was named to her, although she did all in her power to hide her confusion, Miss Everson could not fail to note the hot blood which dyed her face and neck with crimson.

Shortly after this, at her mother's request, who felt dull and miserable in the absence of her daughter, Marguerite returned to "The Priory"—her father's home—looking far brighter and happier than before her visit.

But after awhile the old melancholy seemed to take possession of her, her features became pale and pinched, and she would shrink from the society with which her parents surrounded her.

"No, mother dearest; I feel ill, wearied," she would say. "Alma has often asked me to spend

a few weeks with her. Let me go, darling, and I will come back your own bright Meggie again," and then, with the tears welling to her beautiful sad eyes, she would hang round the neck of the former, who felt she could not refuse her request.

"But why not to your aunt, dear?" she asked. "She would only too gladly welcome you;" but the scared whiteface, which was lifted to her own, stayed the words on her lips, as in entreating tones she begged to go to her youthful friend.

And now, two years after, Marguerite has written to ask that friend to share the hospitality and pleasures of "The Priory" at its most festive season; and the letter still lay on the table before her when Mrs. Johnson was, according to her directions, ushered into her presence.

She was a middle-aged woman, of homely appearance; a black cashmere dress, covered with a shawl of the same shade, and a velvet bonnet, on which bloomed roses of extraordinary size and colour, completed her costume. She dropped a curtsey when the door closed on the girl who admitted her, and the key of the same had been immediately turned by Marguerite herself.

"Sit down, Mrs. Johnson," the latter said, in a subdued voice. "But tell me first, is anything the matter?" And she caught hold of the woman's hand, forgetting, for the moment, in her anxiety, caution, everything but the answer which should await her.

"No, miss, no," the woman replied; "bless 'is heart, but you sees it's over a week now that the money was due, and I'm only a poor woman, or I'm sure I'd be the last to trouble you."

Marguerite turned, her face now dyed with crimson, where but so recently it had been white as marble, when, opening a small cabinet which stood on the table, she withdrew from one of its enclosures a five-pound note, which, with a sovereign from her purse, she placed in the hands of the former.

"I should have sent it to-morrow," she said, "and am so sorry you had to apply for it, but never come here again. I will give you an address to write to should 'it be necessary. You will promise me, won't you?" and she looked pleadingly into the other's face, adding, "I had not forgotten. I wished so much to have brought it to you, but I could not get away."

And then she moved to a wardrobe, from which she took a parcel, on which her tears fell like great drops of rain, and, giving it to Mrs. Johnson,—

"Take this," she said. "I made them all myself, and go quickly. I am so afraid mamma should know of your visit. Good-bye, Heaven bless you!" when noiselessly opening the door she descended the thick carpeted stairs, on which her footsteps were inaudible, followed by the woman, whom she as gently ushered to the snow without.

Another second, and she was again in her own room, from the window of which she watched the black figure of her late visitor wending her way across the lawn of the Priory, the snowflakes forming a fantastic dance around her in the wintry air.

CHAPTER II.

A fortnight later, and Alma Duncan made her appearance in answer to her friend's invitation—a bright, dashing girl, with dancing blue eyes, golden hair, with its glossy waves shimmering in the sunlight, and a complexion like a peach, on which the bloom still rested.

"At last, darling!" said Marguerite, as having led the former from the hall to the bright fire giving forth a glad glow of welcome in the drawing-room, she threw her arms around the neck of the former, regardless of the warm furs in which she was enwrapped, and impressed a fond kiss on her warm cheek.

"And when is the wedding to take place, Meggie?" she asked, whilst returning the caress. "I am sure you must feel very happy to think it will come all right at last, don't you, dear? But what about—"

But before the sentence was completed an elderly lady entered the room, and Marguerite stayed the words on her lips, by introducing her to her mother.

"Why don't you take your friend to her room, Marguerite?" the latter said, after having welcomed the girl to the Priory. "I am sure she will be glad to get rid of her travelling wraps, and Jordan is waiting to assist her to dress for dinner, for I am sure you must want it sadly after your long journey, dear," she continued, addressing Alma. "It is now six o'clock, and papa is very punctual," and she smiled as the sound of a man's foot was heard without.

But it was not papa, as Mrs. Murray had evidently conjectured, but a young man of twenty-four or five who now entered the room. He was tall, broad shouldered, and straight-limbed; his eyes were dark, looking almost black against the extreme pallor of his face, which was alone relieved from offensiveness by a long tawny moustache, which entirely concealed his upper lip.

"Oh, Jack! I am so glad," said Marguerite, advancing to meet him, and drawing him to where Alma still stood on the floor, before the fire. "See, here is my dear, dear friend of whom I told you, Miss Duncan—Mr. Duncan."

Alma acknowledged the introduction, lifting for a moment her pretty blue eyes to those of Marguerite's lover, and then letting them droop beneath the look of admiration he bestowed on her, whilst a flood of crimson rushed to her face.

"I should have known you anywhere, Miss Duncan," he said. "Meggie's description has been so exact," and then he released the little gloved hand, which for a moment had rested in his own, when Mrs. Murray, telling the girls to make haste, for it was getting late, the latter ascended to their rooms.

"You are a lucky girl!" Alma said, when Jordan, having been dismissed, and her farther services dispensed with, the friends seated themselves for a few minutes before the bright, coal fire previous to dinner; "I think he is the handsomest fellow I ever saw."

"And as good as he is handsome," Marguerite answered. "If anything were to part us now, Alma, I think I should go mad; my love is so great for him," and she looked into the other's face, whilst a spasm of pain passed over her own.

"And what should come between you, you silly goose?" Alma answered, rising and surveying her lovely face, with its halo of golden hair, in the glass over the chimney-piece, and then looking down on the softer, more sad beauty of Marguerite, over whose velvety eyes a film had gathered. "You ought to be the happiest woman alive; and I declare you are beginning to doubt a love which has stood the test of a three years' separation! Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," and she stooped until her lips touched the cold, white forehead of the latter; "so now tell me all about—" but just then the gong sounding the sentence remained again unfinished, as Marguerite, hastily rising, linked her arm within that of her friend.

"I will tell you to-night," she said, in her hurry forgetting to take even a passing glimpse at her pretty girlish figure in black tulle, with scarlet berries nestling amid its folds. "Mrs. Johnson was here a fortnight ago."

"Here!" Alma ejaculated. "Whatever did you do?" but before Marguerite could reply they had reached the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Murray, with Jack Ducorne, were only awaiting their presence before proceeding to dinner.

The latter was in faultless evening costume, looking handsomer still, Alma thought, than when in his morning dress she first saw him, whilst she could not fail to notice the admiration with which he in his turn surveyed

her, causing the hot colour to fly to her temples. But in the evening he was intermittent in his attentions to his betrothed, and for awhile the blue eyes of her friend appeared to have no attractions for him.

Their marriage, it was arranged, should take place on the first day of the new year, now but a month hence, after which they were to sail direct for Sydney.

"And you have made all arrangements, dearest?" he was saying, as seated within the recess of the large bow window, which looked out on a wide expanse of lawn, now covered with virgin snow, they gazed on the wild, weird landscape, with the strains of Alma's rich voice falling on their ears, as she, playing her accompaniment, sang on at the piano.

"Yes, dear," she answered, nestling close to his side, hidden from view as they were by the folds of the heavy velvet curtains. "After our wedding and I have bid good-bye to the old Priory, they will meet us at Liverpool; and oh! Jack, if you only knew how that trouble has weighed on my mind you would be sure how glad I shall be that it will at last be ended."

"My darling, the devotion of my life shall be your reward for all you have suffered; but you are certain, Meggie," he whispered, "that your parents know nothing?"

"Positive," she answered, and then, Alma's song ceasing, they moved from their secluded seat.

"Thank you very much, Miss Duncan!" Jack said, approaching to where the latter stood on leaving the piano. "I am passionately fond of music, and you have a magnificent voice!"

"I did not know you even heard me," she returned, with a smile, and a mischievous look in her blue eyes; "but I'll forgive you," she added, with a laugh, and then moved to where the old people were engaged in a game of chess, when a double knock at the outer door caused all to start.

"It is only the post," Alma said. "You are not in London now, dear," Mrs. Murray rejoined, smilingly. "We have but one delivery here, and that is about eleven in the morning," when a servant entered, bearing a telegram on a silver salver, handing the same to Marguerite.

All eyes were turned in her direction, whilst with trembling fingers she tore open the yellow mislaid, and her face became pale as marble, when tearing the same into tiny fragments she threw them into the flames; then, with a look of agony in her dark soft eyes, she cast one glance of mute appeal to Jack Ducorne, now bending over the chair of her friend, and fell senseless to the floor.

CHAPTER III.

On recovering consciousness Marguerite found herself in her own room, Alma anxiously watching by her side, whilst Jordan was chafing her cold hands, and using every means to restore animation.

"I am better now," she said. "I was very foolish to faint," and then she turned an appealing glance to Alma, adding, "That will do, Jordan; Miss Duncan will do all I require now," when, as the door closed on the maid, she grasped the hand of her friend. "Alma, I must leave home to-night or early to-morrow, and I want to do so unknown to all but you and Jack."

There was such a wild excitement in her tone, the tears gushing to her sad eyes, that the former stayed the objection she was about to raise, only asking the reason for her strange resolve.

"The telegram I received was from Mrs. Johnson," was the reply given. "And, oh! Alma! clutching at her dress, 'the doctor gives no hope, he cannot live;' and she burst into a flood of uncontrollable tears.

"But how can you leave home without your mother's knowledge? The servants are sure to

tell her, Meggie," Alma replied, endeavouring to soothe her in her sorrow. "Even now she cannot understand the reason of your sudden illness, and asked Mr. Ducerne if he knew the contents of the telegram?"

For a few moments she remained wrapt in thought; then, suddenly rising, her agitation restoring a bright colour to her face, which was before so deadly pale.

"To-night, Alma dear, I will go to-night. It is but four miles to Rocklands, and I can be back before the house is astir in the morning. Tell me, darling, you will help me?" she continued; "and let mother suppose it is your wish that I should share your room to-night, and then she will not trouble further after I have once bade her good-night. Oh! don't say no," she added, seeing the look of dismay which rested on the face of the other. "I must go, Alma; I must!—I must!"

"But to-night, Meggie!" the latter replied, "and in such weather! See how it snows, and to walk four miles it would be madness!" and she drew aside the heavy curtains which shaded the window, now covered with a blind of tiny flakes.

Even Marguerite shuddered when she advanced to where she could see the snow in its giddy whirl rapidly descending, until, as far as eye could reach, nothing could be seen but one wide expanse of spotless white; and for a moment her resolution wavered; but then the urgent reason that she should not delay her journey presented itself to her mind, and she turned from the dreary prospect before it should again deter her from her purpose.

"Oh! my dear child, I am so glad," Jordan told me you were better, and papa and Jack were so anxious that I thought I would see if you were able to come down again this evening."

It was Mrs. Murray who had just entered the room, and Marguerite advanced from the window to meet her, whilst Alma answered for the latter, saying she did not think she was strong enough to return to the drawing-room, but would rather go to bed.

"So I am going too, dear Mrs. Murray," she added; "and as Meggie wishes me to share her room, you need have no further anxiety respecting her, but say good-night for us to the gentlemen."

"It had nothing whatever to do with the telegram," Mrs. Murray said (referring to Marguerite's sudden indisposition), when later on she joined the latter. "It was only from the dressmaker—Mrs. Wright—respecting some new Paris fashions she has just received, Miss Duncan tells me, but she thinks Meggie has been over exciting herself, so has advised her to go to bed, and nothing will induce her to leave her side. Is she not good?"

"I am sure it is very kind of her," Jack remarked, "and then it was proposed that he and the elder gentleman should repair to the smoking-room."

Meanwhile, no sooner had her mother's footsteps ceased to sound in the corridor than Marguerite proceeded to prepare for her midnight journey. Jordan looked in to ask if she should attend her young mistress, and was not a little surprised to see her in the act, with the assistance of Miss Duncan, of adjusting a heavy black veil, which completely hid her features.

"Don't start so, Jordan," the latter said, bidding her close the door. "You remember the woman who came to see me a short time since? Well, she is dangerously ill, and I must see her to-night."

"To-night, miss!" the woman returned aghast. "Do you know the snow is coming down heavens hard, and didn't you say she came from Rocklands, a good four miles from here?"

"I know," was the reply, "but I don't intend walking, so don't look so frightened. It is only a little after eight now, and but a few minutes will take me to Jackson's farm, where I know I can depend on Joe not only driving me to my destination, but keeping quiet about

it as well; and you will not betray me, Jordan, will you?" she asked, looking pleadingly into the maid's face, whilst hot, bitter tears coursed each other down her fair cheek.

"For no, miss; don't take on so," the other replied. "Why, one would think Mrs. Johnson was your own ma!"

And Jordan could not help wondering how it was that her young lady should take such an interest in a person whom she considered so very common-place.

But smothering her curiosity, she, at Marguerite's desire, quickly saw that the coast was clear. And then, with stealthy steps the latter followed her, the beating of her heart distinctly audible as she descended the stairs.

Joe Jackson had just come in and was taking off his boots, only too glad to settle himself for the evening, when Marguerite's gentle knock was heard at his mother's door.

The former knew she could depend on Joe or Softy, as he was usually called, for from the time when, on one occasion, she had saved him from the ill-usage he was undergoing at the hands of some village lads, the boy had looked up to the good young lady as a superior being, for whom, if needs be, he would lay down his life, as who would not, he would say, for Miss Marguerite.

But his eyes opened wider even than Jordan's had done when, on opening the door, the latter entered the room.

"I want you to drive me to Rocklands, Joe," she said, when he had partly recovered from his surprise.

"We hain't got nought but the market-cart, miss," he said. "But you just get a warm, an' I'll make it as tidy-like as I can, if so be you must go;" and he forthwith proceeded to draw on his wet boots, which were already steaming before the bright fire.

It was but a few moments, though to Marguerite it seemed an eternity, before the old cart was ready; made tidy, as Joe said, with the aid of some horse-rugs, which were thrown over the hard leather seat, and by him drawn around the frail figure of the girl, when, after bidding Mrs. Jackson good-bye and placing a sovereign in the poor woman's hand, they proceeded on their way.

"You will never mention this to any one, Joe?" Marguerite said, when the former, giving the horse the reins, they commenced their journey.

"Not me, miss," was Joe's decisive if not grammatical reply, as they jogged over the uneven ground, the old horse apparently thinking it strange this late travelling when he had been comfortably housed for the night; and he did not take kindly to the half-frozen snow, which would persistently gather into balls beneath his feet, whilst Marguerite inwardly chafed at the delay thus caused, unhelpful of the heavy flakes which had settled like a shroud over the figures of herself and companion, thinking of nothing but a tiny life which was ebbing quickly away; and at the thought that she might be too late the tears gushed to her beautiful eyes.

"Oh, Joe! how slow we are going?" she said excitedly.

"Yes, miss; the roads are that bad; but we are nigh at the end now," and he applied the whip most unmercifully to the old horse as they entered on the one street of which Rocklands boasted.

All was quiet as the grave, not a light visible in the small houses each side of the same save one at the further end, before which was a tiny garden, from which a little gate opened on the road.

It was here that Marguerite bid Joe pull up, when, hastily dismounting and entering within, she told him she would be but a few moments.

Mrs. Johnson had not retired, being uncertain, as she said, whether she would come or no; but the expression on her face told the girl only too plainly that her journey had been in vain; when the former, merely divesting her of the cloak, from which she shook the

snow, led her to an inner room, where the dim light of a single candle alone enabled her to penetrate the darkness.

It was still, so still, and Marguerite's limbs trembled beneath her as, following her guide, she advanced to where a little bed was placed in one corner; and then, when the woman gently removed the upper sheet and showed her the dead face of a baby boy within, she stood as one paralysed, rooted to the spot.

"He went off as peacefully as a lamb, pretty dear," Mrs. Johnson said, gazing on the child, who lay as though moulded in wax, the slightest pink, like a blush rose, resting on his rounded cheek, shaded by the deep black fringes of his closed eyes; a lovely smile played on the tiny mouth, whilst his hair, like little rings of gold, laid on the pure white forehead.

And Marguerite remained transfixed with her great grief, her hot burning eyes, unmoistened by tears, bent on the child's still face, her heaving bosom and quickened breathing alone telling of the agony she was enduring, till Mrs. Johnson, growing alarmed, at last aroused her from her dull, dumb sorrow; when, as though the flood-gates of that grief had given way, she threw herself on the bed in a paroxysm of impassioned tears. Then, as the woman's words of consolation fell on her ears, she became more calm, until, after impressing a last fond kiss on the icy brow, she allowed herself to be led from the room.

Joe and the old horse were shivering with cold when, a few moments having elapsed, she rejoined them.

"I am sorry to have kept you so long in the cold, Joe," she said.

"Oh, never you mind me, miss," Joe returned, and then they relapsed into silence, Marguerite's sobs alone audible, until they once more reached Jackson's farm.

CHAPTER IV.

THE cold winter night had far advanced when Marguerite, refusing Mrs. Jackson's invitation to rest awhile by the fire which she had kept burning, turned her steps towards the Priory.

It was but a few minutes' walk, and around all the stillness of death reigned; the snow had ceased, the moonbeams shining brightly over the glittering white, and revealing to her view the figure of a man resting against the lawn gate.

At first a paroxysm of fear passed through her frame; all alone as she was in that silent hour, when not one friendly light from the adjoining houses but had been long extinguished, and even Joe's protection she had refused; but determining to conceal the dread which caused her heart to beat tumultuously within her, she proceeded onwards until, with a cry of gratitude, she threw herself into the arms of Jack Ducerne.

"Oh! Jack, I was so frightened!" she said; "but how came you to be here?"

"Miss Duncan, whom I happened to see on my way upstairs, and who was evidently waiting for me, told me of your midnight expedition, and I determined to stay till you returned, even hadn't you turned up till the morning, and I had become frozen on my watch; but how you tremble, my pretty bird?" he continued. "Let us get in quickly, for I have managed to keep up a nice fire in the smoking-room, and I have so left the door that we can get in without disturbing any one."

But Marguerite answered not a word, only clinging so close to him, her teeth chattering with the intense cold, a sob ever and anon breaking from her over-charged bosom, as he led her within; and then, when he had made her draw near to the warmth she so much needed, it was that she told him of her great sorrow; and he heard all unanswering, only letting his hand pass over her soft, brown hair, never speaking of the thoughts hurrying through his breast, till with a sudden move-

ments she raised her sad eyes to his in questioning misery, and he drew her to him, imprinting a long, fond kiss on her pale forehead.

"My own, my darling!" he said, "it was Heaven's will;" and then for a few moments each remained, heart beating against heart, until the room became cold and chill, the fire dying gradually away, and the little clock on the mantel-shelf telling of the hours gliding so quickly on.

But the next morning found Marguerite hot and feverish, with an aching in her every limb, and a bright, unnatural light shining in her velvety eyes.

Alma became frightened; and on Mrs. Murray, at her request, coming to see how she was, it was agreed that a doctor should be summoned without delay. And when, a few hours' later, he emerged from the girl's room, there was a serious look upon his countenance.

"She is very ill, madam," he said, as the former met him on his coming from the sick room. "A severe cold, and evidently some strong mental excitement."

And so for the next week Marguerite remained tossing from side to side, her talk rambling of dead children, fancying she was listening to a baby's prattle, and then an outburst of uncontrollable grief.

With the exception of Jack and Alma, all were puzzled at the strange ravings of the sick girl; and at the first nothing would induce the latter to quit her friend's side. But as time wore on Jordan filled her place, and the two, whom Marguerite's illness had thrown in each other's way, seemed to pass most of their time together.

Thus three weeks fled by, the latter sufficiently recovered to leave her room, and Christmas was close at hand, from which but seven days remained until the one formerly fixed for the wedding. Alma and Jack were engaged in disposing of a large bunch of holly in various decorations, and the latter could ill hide the look of admiration with which he regarded the girl, as she busied herself amid the scarlet berries and deep green leaves, her supple form gracefully bending whilst moving to arrange a branch here and there to better advantage.

"No, that will not do, Mr. Ducerne," she said, critically surveying a wreath which Jack had placed over the large chimney-glass; "it is all on one side. Do let me put it right, it is so horribly formal," and without waiting for his reply she hastily ascended the steps on which he had been mounted.

"Do be careful, Miss Duncan," he answered. "Those steps are wretchedly unsteady."

But she only laughed a bright, girlish laugh, reaching forward to more tastefully arrange the holly.

"They are safe enough," she said, looking down from her work. "Give me that little spray, please," pointing to one lying on the carpet, "and I think you will admit mine is a *chef d'œuvre*."

But the steps were not safe, and on Jack leaving them to pick up the desired branch they suddenly gave a lurch, and Alma fell to the ground.

She was not hurt, only the fright for the moment depriving her of speech, as she lay in a huddled heap on the soft rug; but in an instant Jack was by her side.

"Miss Duncan—Alma," he said, "speak to me; tell me you are not injured?" and then with his strong arms he lifted her from the ground where she stood leaning on him for support, with her golden head laid on his shoulder, and he looking down on her fair face, now white as driven snow, the blue eyes closed, their deep fringes resting on her colourless cheeks.

But with a strong effort she lifted the heavy lids, and then as their eyes met each knew the other's secret.

Marguerite, honour, friendship, all forgotten, but that love which in the delirium of their present happiness they feared to confess,

which had smouldered in each other's breast, until like a flame it had suddenly burst forth.

"Alma, my darling, my darling!" he cried, as she endeavoured to disengage herself from his embrace, "do not turn from me. Heaven knows how I have tried, but I cannot conquer my love for you!"

"Hush!" she answered, drawing herself aside. "Marguerite!"

The name of the sick girl for a moment arose as a barrier between them, and he pictured to himself the sad reproach which would meet him in those velvety eyes, whilst no blame would emanate from her lips which he knew so well she would rather let close in death than open to speak other than love for him.

"Ah! Marguerite!" he answered. "Poor Marguerite! I would to Heaven we had never met."

"And yet you loved her," Alma said.

"Never, Heaven forgive me, as I love you!" he replied. "Till you came I was content to give my future life to ensure her happiness; for, listen," and he looked with those passionate eyes of his into her face. "I had done her a great wrong, and whilst the evidence of that wrong remained I could not do otherwise than fulfil the promise I had made."

"And now?" she asked.

"It no longer exists," he answered. "There is no tie now but the tie of love to bind us together, and that, oh, Heaven! is dead too."

"And you would desert her now—you would break your engagement?"

"Yes, yes, a thousand times yes," he interrupted, "if by so doing I could ensure your affection! Oh, Alma, [don't turn from me! Would that I could have loved Marguerite with one-half the love I feel for you! Would you force me to go to the altar with a lie upon my lips, and take a vow before Heaven which I could not keep? No, no, Alma; whilst you live none other can hold a place in my heart, and Marguerite—her child dead—will soon forget me! Only tell me you love me!"

He had drawn her near to him now, his right arm encircling her slender waist, whilst with his left hand he pushed back the golden curls from her forehead, bending down until his lips were warmly pressed on its fair surface whilst waiting for the answer, which came at last, so faint as to be scarcely audible.

"I love you!"

And then he clasped her to his breast in one wild ecstasy of joy, when the door was gently opened—so gently as to be unnoticed by the occupants of the room, who remained unconscious to all but their own great happiness, and Marguerite stood before them.

Yes, Marguerite, worn and thin from the effects of her recent illness, her colourless face, with the dark eyes looking so large and sad as she stood taking in the scene before her, at first scarcely understanding its meaning; and then, when the truth in all its horror burst upon her, with a cry of agony like that of a wounded deer, she gave but one look of mute reproach on lover and friend, and left the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

"I FEEL I am a brute," was Jack's inward soliloquy when a short time after he was in his dressing-room preparing for dinner, "but the girl's delicious beauty turns a fellow's head. What evil fate was it which threw her in my path? And now, supposing Marguerite refuses to hear reason, and acts on what she fully believes to be the case, why, I shall, I conclude, be kicked out by the old gentleman. Well, there is but one course open to me, I must see Meggie alone, disilluionize her mind on that unfortunate transaction of two years back, and trust in Providence for the rest;" and thus satisfactorily settling the matter in his mind, Jack descended to the drawing room as the last gong sounded.

Alma looked lovelier than ever, with the

rose colour deepening beneath her fair skin when her eyes encountered those of the latter; whilst Marguerite, pale and fragile as a lily, threw but one glance of sorrow and reproach in his direction, and then turned sad and weary away.

She was very quiet during the meal, her mind apparently preoccupied while mechanically she went through the form of dining. Jack's sallies of wit or Alma's merry rejoinders failing to arouse her from her apathy, and Mrs. Murray, putting it down to the weakness from which she still suffered, was glad when the time came for them to leave the gentlemen.

"I am afraid you have been over-exerting yourself, dear?" she said, when in the drawing-room she made her rest on a couch, putting the pillow so that she could recline more comfortably, "so try and have a few moments' sleep; and perhaps Alma will give us some music."

But Alma begged to be excused. If Mrs. Murray did not mind, she would like to ascend to her own room, where Jordan was undertaking the alteration of a dress she was to wear on Christmas-eve.

"Very well, my dear," Mrs. Murray replied, "do so if you like, and I will come with you; so we will leave Meggie for a while."

And the latter alone, with her heavy, aching heart, revolved in her mind the events which had occurred since she had taken the first false step which had led to her present misery. Darkness all round, when she had hoped to grasp that happiness for the attainment of which she had suffered so much.

"But he cannot be so false," she cried. "No, no; it is but a passing fancy. He loves me, for am I not his by every tie which is most holy? Am I not his only? My love, my love." And then she buried her face in her hands, to hide from her imagination that scene of which she had been an unwilling witness.

She rose for a moment from the couch on which she was resting to turn down the gas; the light seemed to irritate her nerves, when Jack himself entered the room. He was evidently astonished to find Marguerite alone, and his courage appeared to desert him when he found himself in the presence of her he had so wronged, whilst a resolution to remain still true to his vow wavered momentarily in his mind; but he felt he could not give up bright, beautiful Alma, be the consequences what they may; and he even angered at the sight of the girl's sad face, which was raised piteously to his own, as he advanced into the room.

"Jack," she said, whilst she resumed her seat on the sofa, "will you tell me the meaning of the scene of which I was an involuntary witness between you and Alma?"

Her voice was so quiet, so gentle, where he had expected an outburst of jealous passion, that he stood like a guilty creature before her. The denial to her suspicions, which, had his temper been roused, would have readily fallen from him, died on his lips; and like a child discovered in a fault, he remained silent before her, weighing in his mind what course he should pursue.

"We were so young when we first met, Marguerite," he answered at last, "and a man can scarcely be expected to know his own mind at twenty-two, and separated as we were for nearly three years."

His eyes were lowered to the rug at his feet. He dare not raise them to hers, whilst the words came trembling from him; shame, which he could not fail to feel, hastening each syllable that he uttered.

And she looked on him, her idol, her love, the whole agony of her soul concentrated in the reproach which met him from those sad, dusky eyes.

"Is this true, Jack?" she asked, "or is it some frightful dream? But no, no; I cannot believe it. You loved me once, you must have done; and after all that I have suffered do not tell me that you do not love me now. Oh! my

darling, my darling! and I loved you so much!"

She had risen from her seat, and placing her hands on his shoulder, looked up to him, as he stood before her—her reason, her very life, hanging on the answer he should give.

"This is mere folly, Marguerite," he said. "We were but boy and girl when we made foolish vows to each other, neither at the time being sufficiently versed in the world's ways to understand the misery which we were entailing on our future."

"Foolish vows!" she repeated, "when we are bound to each other by the most sacred ties, Jack, that ever united soul to soul."

"So you think," he answered; "but that is all ended now. Our child is dead, Marguerite, and there is no further fetter to hold us to each other."

For a moment she failed to understand his meaning—the truth of his assertion seemed to her impossible.

No, no, it could not be! He was trying her—he was dazzled for a time by the fresh beauty of Alma; but he loved *her*, for what other woman could be to him what she was?

"Don't speak like that, Jack," she said.

"I am only speaking the truth," he answered.

"The truth!" she ejaculated, and then for the first time the scales fell from her eyes. The man whom she had worshipped, whom she still loved—loved with all the intensity of her nature—stood before her a changed being; her god had become a mortal, invested with all the sins of erring human nature, and yet she loved him.

"And was that a farce, too?" she asked.

"It was," he replied.

And then her hands fell from his shoulders, as all hope, all faith, fell from her heart, leaving only the love there, which would not die.

No word of reproach came from her lips for the great wrong he had done her. She moved from him, her soul bleeding from the wound which no time could heal, her eyes moist with unshed tears alone telling of her inward suffering.

She touched the ring which glittered on her white finger, for the moment intending to return it to him; but no, it was his gift—he had placed it there in those days when she was all in all to him.

She could not part from it now, but unclasping a golden necklet which lay around her fair neck, hidden by the black tulle of her dress, she took from it another, a plain gold circlet, and placed it in his hands.

"The token of your freedom, Jack," she said, and then she turned, fearing to meet his gaze, with that great love burning into her life.

Just then the others entered the room, when Marguerite, pleading fatigue, and that she did not feel so well that evening, excused herself from remaining longer downstairs.

To Alma's wish to bear her company in her own room she merely smiled, saying she was better alone; and then, as Jack opened the door for her, she passed through, the agony she was enduring for a moment welling to her eyes as they turned on him, and then he closed the former on her and her misery.

And all night she lay moaning in her sleep, the tears resting on the black fringes of her closed eyes, for a moment happy in her dreams, only to awaken the next to the reality of her great sorrow.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. AND MRS. MURRAY were not a little surprised when Marguerite told them that her engagement with Jack was at an end, though inwardly they did not regret the turn events had taken, and they were glad the former had found out her mistake before it was too late.

Alma had returned to London, and of course, now that all was over between them,

Jack could not well extend his visit at the Priory.

Jordan felt quite aggrieved that there was to be no wedding after all, and all those beautiful dresses too, which would become old-fashioned before her young lady could wear them out. But "there's many a slip between the cup and the lip," she told the housekeeper, there coming across her mind a time when she was to have been married, and the young man changed his, and married her cousin. "And my belief is that that Miss Duncan was at the bottom of it, with her grinning and smirking. Besides, I wasn't blind, and I saw more than she thought I did," and Jordan congratulated herself on not having had the dust thrown into her eyes.

But when she heard from Mrs. Murray, some time after, that Mr. Ducerne was really going to be the husband of the former, her indignation knew no bounds.

"The horrid, designing creature!" she said; "and Miss Marguerite pining away, until she is but the shadow of her former self; but she'll get paid out for it, mark my words," with which consoling reflection she invariably concluded her remarks on the subject.

But from Marguerite there came no word of complaint. She would not listen to a breath of condemnation respecting Jack, not even from her mother.

"It was not his fault," she would say whenever that lady spoke, as she sometimes did, in no measured terms, of what she considered was his most shameful conduct.

"The blame, if any, rests with me, mother dear, and if I lacked the power to keep him for so short a time, what hold do you think I should have had on his love for a lifetime?"

And then she would press her lips to hers, lifting her beautiful sad eyes pleadingly to her face.

So that it was only with her husband or Jordan, who had been so long in the family, that she could share her mistress's confidence to a certain extent, that Mrs. Murray would give vent to her feelings.

"Miss Marguerite," she would say to the latter, "a young lady fit to be the wife of any peer of the realm; to fret her young life out for the sake of a worthless scamp like Mr. Ducerne."

It was on one of these occasions that Jordan, considering silence was no longer enjoined on her, spoke to her mistress for the first time, of Mrs. Johnson's visit, and her young lady's subsequent journey to that person's supposed death-bed.

"When do you say this occurred?" Mrs. Murray asked in astonishment.

"The night Miss Duncan came, ma'am, but I thought Miss Marguerite would have told you about it by this time," Jordan added, as a kind of balm to her conscience for having betrayed her confidence.

"What a strange thing! And you say she went to see this woman when everyone in the house was in bed, and it was that very night she received that telegram?" Mrs. Murray added, suddenly remembering the same.

"What on earth was the woman to Miss Marguerite?"

"Well, ma'am, to tell you the truth," Jordan answered, whilst brushing the hair of the former, "I don't believe it was Mrs. Johnson at all that was dying, for she had been to see our young lady about a fortnight before, when Miss Marguerite, after seeing her in her own room, let her out at the front door herself. The woman was carrying a parcel, she had none when she came in; and, on going upstairs a few moments after, I picked up this on the stairs, evidently dropped from the same," and Jordan handed to her mistress something she had taken from her pocket.

It was a baby's shoe!

"Good Heavens, Jordan!" Mrs. Murray ejaculated, and she recoiled from the tiny evidence of what she considered her daughter's secret with horror.

"Lor', ma'am, you don't think it had anything to do with Miss Marguerite, do you?" Jordan asked, although she was well aware their suspicions agreed.

But Mrs. Murray, her first surprise over, did not choose to let the other, confidential servant though she was, run away with the idea that she believed in her daughter's shame. So controlling her feelings she answered,—

"Certainly not, Jordan. Some low-born *protege* of Miss Meggie's, no doubt," and then the former, having completed her toilette, was about to leave the room.

"Please, ma'am, don't say I told you anything," the maid asked, regarding her mistress's departing figure, "for I promised Miss Marguerite I would not tell anyone."

"Miss Marguerite shall not know that her confidence was misplaced, Jordan," Mrs. Murray replied, coldly; and then she closed the door behind her, leaving the other, as she declared after, fit to bite her tongue out to think she had said anything about it.

But to rest long without letting Marguerite know that she had learnt her secret was not in Mrs. Murray's nature to do, so that very afternoon it was that she determined on telling her of the knowledge she had attained.

Mr. Murray had been from home for the last few days, but had written to say he should return that evening, bringing the son of an old friend home with him; and with this letter in her hand Mrs. Murray entered the drawing-room, where after lunch Marguerite was reclining on one of the couches.

The morning had been lovely, a bright January sun causing the hoar-frost resting on bush and bough to glitter like diamonds beneath its rays, but, as is not unusual in our changeable climate, in the afternoon it had become cold, miserable, and gloomy, leaving the former no inclination to take her customary walk before dinner.

"Your father will be home to-day, Marguerite," Mrs. Murray said, moving to the sofa on which her daughter was resting, "and he brings with him the son of an old college friend, a Mr. Isidore Standish. But how wearied and ill you look, Meggie! I am sure nothing but a change will do you good!"

"I shall be better when the spring comes, mother," she answered. "And so papa is going to bring Mr. Standish to the Priory?"

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Murray replied, in the discussion of the present topic forgetting the strange story told by Jordan. "It appears he is in holy orders, and has been curate of Rocklands for the last two or three years, the Rector being too old to do more than officiate in the pulpit; and had it not been for your father's visit to his old friend, his father, we should never have heard of it till the Day of Judgment!"

But Jordan, at this moment entering with the afternoon tea, recalled to Mrs. Murray's mind the confidences of the morning, and when the delicate china service had been placed on a small table drawn near to where the ladies were seated, and the maid had retired, she decided at once to enter on the subject.

"Jordan has been telling me, Marguerite," she commenced, heedless of all promises given to the former that she would not name her, "that a strange woman came to see you some time since, and that on the evening you received the telegram, which I was led to believe came from Mrs. White, that you left your home in the night to travel four miles to attend the same woman's death-bed. Is this true?"

The fragile cup which Marguerite held fell with a crash against the steel of the fender, and stooping to pick up the broken fragments her mother was prevented from seeing how colourless she had become in that moment of mental torture, but with a strong effort she quickly recovered herself.

"Could Jordan tell you no more, mamma?" she asked.

"She could not," was the reply; "but she

said when you let the woman out on the day she visited you she picked this up on the stairs, where the latter had evidently dropped it from the parcel you gave her;" and diving into the pocket of her black satin dress she brought forth the baby's shoe, which Jordan had given her but a short time since.

"And if," she answered, after a moment, in which she had sufficiently recovered herself so as to hide the pain which, like a knife, was running into her heart, "if I did, was the crime very great? This woman I had known when in London, and during my visit she had placed in her charge a child whose parents, having contracted a secret marriage, were compelled to keep its existence secret also. I promised to see that it was well cared for, and when I made that midnight journey it was, I had hoped, to have seen it breathe its last, but I was too late—it was dead."

A film had gathered over her dusky eyes, but with a strong effort she kept back the tears which welled from her heart, and she raised an inward prayer of thankfulness to Heaven; when the sound of men's voices in the hall arrested the question which her mother was about to ask, and a few moments later Mr. Murray and his young guest entered the room.

CHAPTER VII.

"FANCY Isidore living so near, and my not to know it, mamma?" Mr. Murray said, as he introduced the former to his wife and daughter; but he could not fail to notice the slight start he gave when his eyes met those of Marguerite, a circumstance for which the young man accounted by saying she bore such a striking resemblance to a lady he once knew.

But there was not much time then for explanations; they were hungry as hunters, the old gentleman declared, when Mrs. Murray, saying dinner would be on the table as soon as they had changed their dress, Isidore was hastily led by the latter to his dressing-room.

The dinner passed off pleasantly enough, Mr. Murray commenting on the happy time he had spent with his old friend, interspersed with past recollections of the days when they were at Christ's, and the strange facts which had brought them together again, when years to each had wrought such changes.

Marguerite was quiet, scarcely daring to raise her eyes in the direction of her father's guest, although longing for an opportunity when she could speak to him alone; and when her mother gave the signal for them to adjourn to the drawing-room, a hope that the same would soon present itself filled her mind.

It was not long before the elder people, accustomed to their after-dinner nap, were soon asleep, and Isidore, leaving the old gentleman to enjoy the same, ventured to join the ladies.

Mrs. Murray was, like her husband, in the land of dreams, and as the young clergyman opened the door, Marguerite, by a movement of her hand, enjoined silence when he entered the room.

She was sitting in the same recess where she and Jack had sat on the evening of Alma's advent, and as she reviewed in her mind the events which had followed her coming, a dull, throbbing pain made her heart to beat with the anguish she was enduring. Oh, if she could but hate him! But no, such love as she had given him would never die—hope, faith, all dead but that—until she longed, prayed for the rest which in the grave alone would be hers now.

She had merely turned her head as Isidore approached, the mute pain she was enduring alone visible in the depths of her velvety eyes, and when he asked her of Jack not a breath of complaint passed her lips, not a word of reproach for the man who had marred her life.

"Speak low," she said, bidding him sit near her. "Oh! I am so glad to be able to have these

few moments with you, for my parents must never know that we have met before; promise me that."

He looked into her sad, worn face, wasting day by day with its silent sorrow, a puzzled look upon his own.

"I do not understand!" he answered. "When last I heard from Jack he told me he was coming here to claim his bride; and, indeed, I hoped when Mr. Murray asked me to visit him that we should have met under happier circumstances."

He waited for her answer, but her face was colourless as the snow without, and he thought she had strangely aged since that morning when, as a bright, happy girl, she had stood before him at the altar.

"He has been here," she said at last, her features working convulsively with her great agony, "but he has gone. It was a mistake, Mr. Standish. I could not make him happy, so we parted; but don't blame him," she added suddenly, "it was my fault, not his; and Alma she was so bright, so beautiful."

"Jack gone! Alma! What is it you mean?"

"Oh! didn't you know?" she asked. "They are to be married; she will be his wife, and I was only his—"

"It is not true, Marguerite," he answered, his voice quivering with excitement, whilst he stayed the words on her lips, his big heart throbbing with indignation at the thought of the great wrong her words conveyed, whilst a gleam of hope passed over her sad face, that she at least, had been saved that degradation.

For a moment she raised her pure eyes to his.

"Tell me," she said, "that it is not true. He told me that that ceremony in Rooklands church was but a farce, only gone through by him to satisfy my conscience, but that there was nothing legal to bind us to each other."

"And you let him go like that?" Isidore asked.

"He no longer loved me!" she replied, "and I loved him—oh! with such love!—that I could not stand between him and his happiness. I am happy now, for you have told me I am not so lost as once I thought I was; but promise me you will not use your knowledge of our secret as to mar his future, for I could not live to be a burden to him, to be a mill-stone round his neck. But should time demand it of you in the future, only promise me that when I am dead my father and mother shall know that I never disgraced the name they gave me."

He clasped within his own the white transparent hands she held towards him.

"Marguerite," he said, "there is little I would not promise you, but I cannot, dare not, allow this great wrong to be done to you. The holy office I hold, my conscience, my every feeling, would rebel against it. No aspersion shall ever be thrown upon your name which I will not refute; and whilst Jack places no other in your place, for your sake I will not speak; but further than that, do not ask me what I cannot do."

"Then you are not my friend," she replied, almost impatiently.

"Your friend, Marguerite!" he repeated; "I, who would—but there," he added in a different tone, "the fates willed otherwise."

"Yes, the fates willed otherwise," she echoed, and then they moved from the window, she to listlessly turn over some drawings, and he to contemplate how he should act in the future.

The next morning Mrs. Murray received a letter from her sister, in reply to one she had written, in which she had mentioned Marguerite's delicate health, and the idea that a change was the only remedy she thought likely to effect a cure; and Miss Eveson had answered it to say how gladly she would welcome her to the Lodge.

"Well, Marguerite, what am I to say to Aunt Eleanor?" her mother said, after having finished the letter.

"Oh! I will go, mother dear," the girl answered, raising her head for a moment from the book which lay open before her, and then letting her eyes droop on the same to hide the tears with which they had become suffused.

She had but one object in view now, and that was to save Alma. She had loved her once, and although she had come between her and her life's happiness, still she could not allow her to fall unwarned into an error worse than her own.

So she wrote, telling her of her proposed visit to Myrtle Lodge, and how much she wished to see her, praying of her, for her own sake, not to refuse her.

But she had been with her aunt now nearly six weeks, and no Alma; she had seen her once, when with the former she was driving in the park, and she with Jack had passed close to where they were; but a presentiment that she would not much longer remain a barrier to their union had taken possession of her, and with that conviction she deterred from the purpose she had before resolved in her mind to carry out.

She knew that Isidore had written to Jack, which letter, doubtless, would have the effect of causing him to hesitate ere he led Alma to the altar whilst she still lived, and she was growing weaker day by day with that great sorrow, as a worm gnawing at her heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I wish I could send you better tidings of poor Meggie; but the child grows more shadow-like day by day, although she never complains; and the doctor, called in for my own satisfaction, cannot find any disease to account for it."

Thus Miss Eveson wrote to her sister, whilst Marguerite, reclining on her white bed, the rose-coloured curtains of which had given a tinge of pink to her then, wan face, was looking on the bright green of the new-born leaves, which rustled with the gentle spring breeze, as the boughs swayed to and fro before her window. It was so calm, so peaceful there in that suburban home, and the sun shone so gloriously over the new young life around, that even she, who had grown so weary of the world, felt a desire for the moment to linger longer on the earthly shore ere she crossed to the great unknown.

"I am very young," she murmured, "and in the future, even for me, a happiness might be in store, when I should look on all I have suffered as the phantasies of a frightful dream;" and then with a weary sigh as that of a tired child, she closed her heavy eyelids, the deep fringes resting on her sunken cheek, and for a brief moment her sorrow was lost in oblivion.

In the meanwhile, Alma was growing impatient at the repeated excuses Jack made that their wedding should be postponed, whilst he, although at first anxious as she was that it should take place, felt afraid to defy Isidore after the way in which he had written; besides which, now that it was all over between them, there were times when his heart would ache for the girl he had so betrayed; and it was then that Alma's beauty would, far from pleasing, prove irritable to him.

It was when he was in one of these moods that another letter arrived from the curate. It was after the one Mrs. Murray had received from her sister, and in it Isidore told him of Marguerite's declining health, imploring him to do her justice, and, if possible, save her before it was too late.

"Her parents know nothing at present," the letter went on, "and I will not undecieve them for her sake; but if you persist in entering into a marriage with Miss Duncan, in the behalf of law and justice I shall speak. I do not threaten; I appeal to your better nature, and the love which at one time I cannot believe but what you once had for this unhappy child."

"ISIDORE STANDISH."

Several times Jack read and re-read the words it contained, which burnt as iron into his soul; and then, determining no longer to conceal the truth, he went to Alma.

She was looking very pretty in her morning dress of blue batiste, with a bunch of spring flowers nestling in the soft lace round her fair throat; and as Jack entered she closed the book she had been reading.

"You are early, dear?" she said, holding out a tiny plump hand. "Mamma is not down yet, so we can have a long chat all to ourselves; but how miserable it looks!" and she playfully patted his cheeks. "What is the matter?"

"I am not very well, Alma. Besides, I have much I want to talk to you about. Marguerite is dying, and I cannot rest till I have confessed to you the great wrong I have done her."

"Dying! nonsense!" she replied, impatiently; "I don't believe a word about it; and as to the wrong you mention you told me of that long ago, when we were at the Priory; but is it, Jack, that you are now growing weary of me, and want to return to your old love?" and she raised her pretty blue eyes, wet with tears to his.

It was enough. Jack's resolves to do right, to tear himself from her bewitching presence, vanished in an instant; she had reasserted her power over him, and he was lost.

"No, darling Alma!" he answered; "you know you are dear to me as ever," and true at the time under the influence of her fascination he was ready to forfeit honour, all, for her sake, and after drawing from her an unwilling compliance to his wishes that their marriage should not take place until the report respecting Marguerite was either corroborated or denied, he left, safe as before in her toils, and his guilty secret still locked in his own bosom.

That afternoon Alma called at the villa. Miss Eveson received her most coldly, but when she told her that it was at Marguerite's expressed wish that she was there she ice broke, and after a few moments she was led to the room in which the sick girl lay. She had grown so weak now that she was unable to leave her bed, literally dying of a broken heart, her aunt said; for although she had consulted the cleverest men in London, they could discover nothing to account for her strange wasting away.

It was a lovely morning in May, and the air was soft and balmy as that of June; she window was open, so that the warm sun might rest on the flowers which had been lovingly placed here and there around the room; her face, white as the pillow on which she lay, looked whiter still in contrast to the dark hair which in all its wealth fell around her; and even Alma's heart bled for the girl so gradually slipping away, who was once her bosom friend.

"My darling! my darling!" she cried, hastily rising to throw her arms around the other's neck, excitement for the moment giving strength to her wasted frame. "You have come at last; I am so glad!"

"Then you are not angry with me, Marguerite?" Alma said, pillowing the girl's head on her bosom, "because—"

"Because he loves you, Alma!" and the dark velvety eyes were raised to hers. "No dear, he will be happier with you; but let it not be till I am gone; promise me that!" and she looked pleadingly into her face.

"But you are not going, Marguerite," Alma replied, the old girl love for her friend for the moment welling to her breast. "You will get well, dearest; and all that has passed will be forgotten!"

"Never! never!" she answered. "But for your own sake, Alma, do not marry Jack till I am gone. I love you still, dear; shall love you to the end, for when I wanted a friend in the time of my trouble I came to you, and you—remember, Alma, how distressed I was—and you soothed me, and gave me comfort when I had not a friend. I have never forgotten that; and for your sake and his I will

guard my secret to the last. I have told all to auntie, all but that; my baby is in Heaven, and I shall be happier there, dear—happier there! Let me lie down now, I so soon grow tired!" and Alma laid her weary head on the pillow, while the leaves rustled in at the window, all speaking of a new, fresh life, with the bright sun over all, and she lay dying in the morning of her youth!

And Alma sat by her side, silent and sad, in that moment feeling she could give up Jack, happiness, all, if Marguerite could live; for to her such love as hers seemed impossible, whilst a sense of guilt filled her bosom when she reviewed in her mind the part she had acted, and her eyes were filled with tears which coursed each other down her pink cheeks as Miss Eveson entered the room.

"You must excuse me, Miss Duncan, that lady said, 'but I am afraid you must say 'good-bye' to Marguerite; she is too weak to bear much fatigue.'"

And true, Marguerite was wearied, too wearied to do more than press Alma's hand clasped within her own; and then the latter, imprinting a kiss on her pale lips, with Miss Eveson left the room, whilst the songs of birds resounded in the soft spring air, and a passing sunbeam rested on the face of the dying girl.

CHAPTER IX.

ISIDORE STANDISH was at the Priory (he frequently walked there from Rockland now) when a letter arrived from Miss Eveson, in which she told her sister of the confidence reposed in her by her niece.

"It is a very sad story," she wrote; "but, Maude, you must not be hard upon the child, for she was but a child, when she was led away, and that she was induced to go through some form of marriage which she believed to be valid at the time, although, to screen the villain who has thus shadowed her young life, she will not admit the same, I am convinced is the case. She has given into my hands a sealed paper, which I have promised, at her urgent wish, not to open until after her death, and although I have hoped against hope, still I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that she is slowly passing away. If you and Mr. Murray could come I should feel happier if you were here, not that there is any immediate danger, but maybe your presence might influence her to set our minds at rest, on that point at least, whilst you would become more reconciled to that which I fear no human power can avert—the last parting."

The young clergyman with the latter was seated by the table, discussing the affairs of a parochial meeting held the previous night, and so deeply interested were they in the matter that they failed to notice the effect Mrs. Murray's letter had on her, until the same fell from the poor lady's hand, and they turned to find her white and still, save for a moan which escaped her lips, as she fell back in her chair.

"She has only fainted; don't be alarmed," and begging the elder gentleman ring for assistance, Isidore rushed to her side.

He lifted the latter from where it had fallen, when something beyond curiosity led him to scan its contents, after which, carefully refolding it, he placed it in the hands of Mr. Murray, when Jordan entered the room.

"You had better come up a bit, ma'am," the latter said, and her mistress having partially recovered; but with a sense of sorrow resting on her features, which she could not then fully realize, allowed herself to be led away.

As the door closed behind her, Isidore turned to his old friend, who sat like one paralyzed with the open letter before him.

"Mr. Murray," he said, "do not despair. If it please Heaven to take your daughter to Himself it is not for us to rebel against His decree; but that her memory shall remain to you pure and holy, as she is herself, is a task I will set

myself to do, to clear her name from an unworthy stain, I esteem my duty."

"But what should you know, Isidore, of my child's unhappy past?"

Mr. Murray had raised his head, his moistened eyes fixed in wonder on the face of his companion, whilst the wrinkles on his forehead had perceptibly deepened in that moment of agony.

"I knew your daughter some years since," he replied, "having been introduced to her when she was on a visit to some friends in London, meeting her accidentally on one occasion, when she was in the society of Jack Ducerne. The latter and myself were old schoolfellows, and the Duncans being distant relations, I frequently met Marguerite at their house."

"But I was led to believe at that time that Jack held no intercourse with my daughter," Mr. Murray interrupted. "In fact, that he had left for Australia."

"Unfortunately, such was not the case," the young man replied; "although, as he told me in confidence, when I questioned him respecting his relations with Marguerite, such was the idea with which you and he parted. But don't ask me more at present, Mr. Murray, for I dare not answer further than to tell you that the days your daughter spent in London were mostly passed with Jack Ducerne. I was frequently with them at that time awaiting my election to the curacy of Rocklands, unconscious that, by becoming a party to their clandestine intercourse, I was doing a wrong to my father's oldest friend."

"I cannot blame you," Mr. Murray replied, raising his head until his eyes rested on those of the curate.

"To repair that wrong as far as I am able I must leave you now," the latter answered, extending his hand; "and when we again meet, Mr. Murray, your daughter's name shall be cleared from the blot now resting on it."

"Good-bye, Isidore, Heaven bless you." It was all the old man could say, and then his head again sank on his breast, as the door closed on the former.

A short time after and the young clergyman was on his way to the metropolis, arriving at his destination late in the afternoon.

He had stayed but to place in the bag he carried such necessities as he should require for the few days he had given himself in which he could be absent from his parish; and hailing a cab, on emerging from the station, was soon being whirled along the busy streets to the old lodgings he had been accustomed to occupy when in town.

The landlady, only too glad to accommodate him, was not long in procuring for him such refreshment as he desired. The journey had made him feel dirty and uncomfortable, and he was not sorry to avail himself of a wash and change of apparel whilst the same was in preparation.

The fear that he should be too late to see Jack that evening made him impatient of delay; so hastily disposing of the dinner provided him, he, after a few moments, drove to the chambers he occupied.

The former was in full enjoyment of a fragrant havannah, whilst reclining on a couch near the open window, lazily watching the curls of smoke evaporating from the same, and the branches of the single tree, as they moved to and fro, causing the leaves to rustle gently in the spring air.

The tree had been there from time immemorial, and Jack was wondering how many like himself had lain and watched it from the old inn, when the door opened, and Isidore was announced.

But there was that on the face of the latter which stayed the jovial words about to fall from the other's lips, as he rose to welcome him.

"What is it, old fellow?" he asked, extending his hand. "You look as lively as a mule at a funeral!"

"We have been old friends, Jack," the other answered, after shaking hands, "and for the

sake of that friendship, and in justice to the poor girl to whom you have done this great wrong, I have come to ask you to absolve me from my oath."

He stood by the chair, which Jack had offered him. He would not sit in his presence until he had received his answer; whilst the former, knocking the ash from his cigar, surveyed him critically.

"What if I did," he said at last. "It would make no difference; the marriage was not legal, for I conclude you are alluding to Marguerite Murray."

"On what grounds do you make this assertion, and dare to repudiate the claim she has upon you?"

"Simply this, my dear fellow," Jack answered, his nonchalance causing the hot blood to surge and wave in the breast of his companion; "the ceremony we went through was after canonical hours, the names on the register are false. Take my advice, Isidore," placing his hand on the other's shoulder, whilst he noted the tempest raging within him, "don't interfere with what doesn't concern you. Why, one would think you were in love with the girl yourself!"

It was a stray shot, but it struck home, and as the young curate felt that the other knew his secret, a keen, sharp pain came to his heart.

He shook himself free from his hateful touch, then drawing himself up to his full height, stood firm and resolute before him.

"Would to Heaven, Jack," he said, "that you had loved her as I do; but I came to you, not to speak of that, for her heart is dead to all but the man who betrayed her. She is dying, and she loves you still, but to clear her name from an unworthy blot, which will yet tarnish its purity, long after the grass waves over her grave, I came here to implore you to do her justice."

"No, no, Standish, I can't believe that. Self interest is at the bottom of it, depend upon it; it is only human nature," and Jack proceeded to light another cigar, a credulous smile lurking round the corners of his mouth.

"Jack Ducerne, I have finished," and taking his hat from the table, Isidore turned to leave. "We part," he added, "I to break my oath, which I esteem a less sin than to permit an innocent girl to pass away, and allow her sorrowing parents to believe her other than she is, you to take the consequences of your guilt."

"You dare to threaten?"

It was Jack's voice now, who had hastily moved towards the door to prevent the other's exit, but Isidore turned him on one side as though he had been a child, and before he had time to recover himself he was gone.

But on his return to the Priory, a day or two after, he was told that Mr. and Mrs. Murray had been summoned to London, Miss Eveson having telegraphed, urgently begging of them to come at once to see the last of their child.

Isidore had lingered longer than he had intended in the metropolis, not caring, his first passion over, to leave until he had had another interview with Jack, and now he was too late; so hastily proceeding to Rocklands, and obtaining from the Rector a further leave of absence, he again took train for London; and he was not a little astonished on his arrival, when stepping on the platform, to see Alma alighting from a carriage on the same.

"Miss Duncan!" he said, "I am so glad to have met you;" and he told her of his recent visit to Jack's chambers, and what transpired at their last meeting, adding the reason of his sudden return to the metropolis.

"I know you think me very wicked, Mr. Standish," she answered; "but really I did not know that Marguerite was married to Jack, for when she came to me, before her little boy was born, she led me to believe such was not the case, and even afterwards at the Priory she never told me to the contrary; and do you think they will let me see her now?" she added, the tears starting to her

eyes, "for you know Miss Eveson would scarcely speak to me!"

Isidore looked at his companion. It was such an event for Alma to be sad that a feeling of pity for her came over him, and he no longer deemed her the designing girl he once did—the more so when she told him as soon as she knew the truth Jack and she had become strangers, her pretty blue eyes looking so miserable when she declared she should never love any one else; but if Marguerite would forgive her, she should not feel so unhappy; and then, promising her that he would use his influence that she should see her friend before it was too late, they parted, Isidore seeing her into a cab before he proceeded to his destination.

CHAPTER X.

THE bright June sun was fast sinking beneath the purple clouds, edged with the gold of its declining rays—the stillness of the quiet evening resting on leaf and bough, when Isidore presented himself at the Lodge.

Miss Eveson was the first to come to him in the pretty little drawing-room, where the closed piano, the empty easel, a girl's work-basket in which the coloured wools and untouched embroidery seemed to speak to him of her whose spirit was already hovering on the golden shore.

"Mr Standish!" she said, advancing to meet him, her face bearing traces of the emotion she was undergoing, "my sister will be so glad, for she has told me why it was that you came to London, and I think I see that on your face which speaks of hope."

"Hope so far, Miss Eveson," he replied, "that having given my word as a gentleman that Mr. Ducerne will suffer no more than his conscience has already made him. I am released from the oath I once took never to disclose his marriage with Miss Murray."

"Then she was married, our poor Marguerite? Thank Heaven for that!" And Miss Eveson pressed the hand of the young clergyman.

"She was," he answered; "I officiating at the time. But you have not yet promised me the favour I asked respecting Jack Ducerne," he added.

But the good lady was too thankful to do more than say that all would be forgiven, so that the stigma was removed from the name of her darling; and then, in her joy, consenting to his prayer on behalf of the former, that he might be allowed to see his wife, she was about to leave the room, when Alma's request occurred to his recollection.

"I must petition for one other," he said; "Alma Duncan."

"Alma!" And a cloud passed over her countenance. "I can scarcely think her presence would be desirable at the death-bed of one she has so wronged."

"Miss Eveson," and Isidore laid his hand gently on that lady's arm, "Alma knew not of the sacred ties which existed between her friend and Jack; and when she accepted his attentions and gave him her heart, she felt guilty but of the wrong of having won that of her lover. She was weak—foolish if you will—but not the wicked girl you deemed her. She loves Marguerite dearly, and no one regrets more than she does the part she unconsciously played in bringing such sorrow upon her."

"You are an earnest pleader, Mr. Standish," the lady replied, and then she left him to prepare Marguerite for an interview with her erring husband.

Jack and Alma arrived a short time later, in response to the telegram sent by Isidore. It was the wish of the former that they should together bid her good-bye, and the early summer day had come to an end, a heavy dew covering blade and leaf with welcome moisture, prognosticating the advent of a glorious

morrow, with the gnats dancing a giddy dance before, as the doors of the Lodge, in which a young life was slowly ebbing away, opened to receive them.

"I will go in first," Miss Eveson said, whilst proceeding them to the sick-room.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray were each side of the bed; but when the former told them who it was they arose, and after kissing the white, wan face of their child, left her as Alma with Jack entered within.

A glad light entered into the velvety eyes when Miss Eveson, stooping over her niece's pillow, told her of the arrival of the latter, and when they advanced to where she lay, her dark hair falling like a mantle around her, she stretched out her arms, placing a thin, transparent hand within their own.

"I am so glad," she cried, faintly; "oh, Jack, so glad! After all I have suffered this is peace at last!"

"Can you forgive me, Marguerite?" he asked, "for it was I, not Alma, who so sorely sinned against you?"

"I have nothing to forgive, dear!" she answered. "It was not your fault, Jack, that I could not retain your love; but be good to her," and she turned to where Alma stood bathed in tears, "and I shall die happy. I shall not stand between you long, and I am not sorry to go—this is a weary, weary world; and when I am gone judge me not harshly, for I sinned through my love for you, and you— you loved me once, Jack!"

"Oh, Marguerite, my love, my wife, I love you now!"

And then, for the first time, now that she was passing from him, now that her lips would so soon be sealed in death, he knew of the great love which existed in his breast for the dying girl.

And the soft, sad eyes, over which the film was already gathering, saw, too, the passion which had flickered into life but to die, and a gleam of happiness passed over her features. It was but momentary; when taking a hand of each she drew them in a clasp beneath her own wasted ones.

"For my sake," she said, "promise me that, and then I shall know I have not sinned in vain!"

Little knowing the meaning of her words, but to satisfy the anxiety depicted on her countenance, each gave the required promise, when all trouble seemed to pass from her pure face, over which a heavenly calm apparently settled, and she remained still, their hands yet held within her own.

For some moments they stood watching—those two who had wrought her such wrong; the strong man who but a short time back had laughed at love, his bosom now racked with love for her who was going from him, whilst Alma would have renounced all to have saved her friend.

And as they watched the heavy lids, once more unclosed, a smile like an infant's played for a moment around her mouth, and then they closed; there was a slight quiver of the features, the white thin fingers gave one convulsive clutch, and Mrs. Murray with the others entered as the last sigh escaped her lips.

She was dead!

And Jack and Alma passed out, leaving the parents alone with their lifeless clay, to see Isidore Standish, the anguish of his soul alone visible in the mute, unspeakable sorrow depicted on his every feature.

She had never blamed him, and his big heart was bursting with the great love which would be with him to the end.

And the glorious promise of the morrow was fulfilled; the sun shining brightly, throwing its beams within the closed shutters of the dead girl's chamber, whilst the sparrows chirped and twittered to each other as they assembled on the window-sill, wondering why they did not receive their daily crumbs; and she lay still and peaceful there, with the sweet scent of fresh-gathered roses around, and the songs of birds she could no longer hear.

CHAPTER XI.

THE last sad rites had been performed over the remains of Marguerite; the doctor's certificate giving as the cause of death some new form of disease, designated by a latin word which no one could understand, more than he could conscientiously certify to the same which ended her life, but which her parents attributed to a broken heart—a belief in which Miss Eveson fully concurred until when, one day arranging the dead girl's effects, she remembered the packet confided to her care.

"It was her wish it should be opened after her death," she said to Mrs. Murray, who was present, not having yet returned to the Priory; "and her wish may have conveyed more meaning than I could at the time understand;" so advancing to the table on which a desk containing the same was placed, she unlocked it, withdrawing the document from the place where it had lain since the day Marguerite placed it in her hand.

A feeling that it would remove the mystery surrounding her illness Miss Eveson felt convinced, as she broke the seal, and opening the paper commenced to read.

At first the writer related the circumstance of her accidentally coming across Jack Duorne when on a visit to her aunt—at the time that they had promised her parents not to see each other for the space of three years; how that, persuaded by her lover, she agreed to meet him frequently, until at last she consented to a secret marriage, Isidore Standish, just then appointed to the curacy of Rocklands, and a friend of the former, promising to perform the ceremony. Then she continued:—"I returned home for awhile, and one afternoon Jack and I met at that place where Isidore was in readiness to undertake the office. We were married in the name of Mann, fearing to sign our own, an old man and woman in the parish being paid as witnesses. Afterwards I was wretched at the Priory, and I prevailed on my mother to let me visit Alma, my girl friend, with whom I remained when I was not with my husband until it was imperative he should sail for Australia, the land of our future home. With sad hearts we parted; and it was then that I felt I had no one to whom I dare tell the secret of my child's expected advent but to Alma, withholding even from her the fact that I was a wedded wife. She said she could only help me by taking me to a Mrs. Johnson, her old nurse. She did so, I only too glad to avail myself of her kindness. It was under her roof my babe was born; and when again I returned to the Priory I persuaded her to leave London and take up her residence in a small cottage at Rocklands, so that I could occasionally visit my little boy. After much demurring she did so, and then two years went by, when Jack was to return from Australia, and claim me openly as his bride."

Here the girl's feelings had evidently overcome her, for the page was blotted with tears, as she went on to relate the time when she received tidings of her child's illness, and her journey all through the winter's snow, to find him gone; then the events that followed, and the agony she suffered when she discovered that the man for whom she had undergone so much, loved her no longer, depicting the mad feeling of shame which coursed through her veins, as she listened to his assertion that she was no wife.

Then she wrote of the relief experienced when Isidore Standish told her that it was false, and the determination which all at once took possession of her mind to sacrifice her own life, that she might not stand in the way of the happiness of him whom she still loved with such intensity. She farther stated how she procured certain herbs, of which she had read, which taken in proper doses would prove a slow and sure poison without leaving any traces of their subtle power to destroy life; and then, even at the last, fearing that after

death, suspicion might arise, involving others in trouble, she resolved to confess the act which had shortened her days. Then followed a prayer that Miss Eveson would forgive her, even as she felt her Maker would, for the rashness of a purpose, a power she was unable to defy, had forced her to carry out.

The paper fell from Miss Eveson's hands, she, feeling herself unable, owing to her emotion, to read to the end; but there was little more than affectionate farewells to those dear to her, and a trust that in the future there would be true happiness in the united lives of Alma and him for whom she had sacrificed her own.

"All for love!" Mrs. Murray said, and then the sisters consigned to the flames the sad story of their child's sin.

EPILOGUE.

MANY years have passed since then, and Marguerite's last wish that Jack and Alma should be united has long taken place, although not until the winter's snow had again covered the ground was the same carried out; but they never knew that it was by her own hand that the dead girl, whose memory remains so dear to each, hastened her own end; but though they have several little ones to entwine themselves around their affections, the dearest of all is a tiny maiden, with soft brown eyes—"Marguerite."

Isidore is now Rector of Rocklands, that living having been in the gift of Mr. Murray, who at the death of the old incumbent presented it to the former; but he never married, the love of his life long since buried, though fresh as yesterday in his heart of hearts.

[THE END.]

CONCEALED TREASURES.—A detective who makes a lucrative income by searching for the concealed hoards of misers, relates a case where the deceased had put the money into a piece of old steam-pipe, and after plugging up the ends of the pipe had buried it in his garden. The place was discovered by the shrewdness of the detective, who ascertained that the deceased, when going out anywhere on the farm, would always walk in one path, towards an old used-up pump, and after reaching the pump, start for the field. The pump was taken up and the old well was searched, but the money was not there. On returning to the house the detective went to the window looking out upon the pump, and noted a small surveyor's point on the sill. He "lined" it up to the pump, measured out the exact centre of the line, and began digging. The treasure-laden steam-pipe was struck at a depth of four feet. In former days the old arm-chair was a favourite place for the secretion of money, and this piece of furniture is generally selected by story writers as the receptacle for the fortune of the peculiar old grandfather and grandmother, which is bequeathed to the worthy young couple. When stern adversity seizes the young pair they are compelled to sacrifice the old arm-chair. But, before it is disposed of, by some mysterious interposition of Providence, the chair falls asunder and reveals the treasure it has so long and faithfully guarded. So extensive was this mania for hiding money in old pieces of furniture that the career of an arm-chair bequeathed to any impecunious person by an eccentric and rich relative was of brief duration after coming into the possession of its new owner. The Spanish Inquisition was nothing to the tortures that old chair was subjected to by the gold-seekers; but this simple concealment is not in favour now, and it requires a long head to ferret out the hiding-place of the modern miser's money.

How can a man learn to know himself? By reflection never, only by action. In the measure in which thou seekest to do thy duty shalt thou know what it is in thee. But what is thy duty?—the demand of the hour.

THE PREACHING MONKEY.—There is a curious animal, a native of South America, which is called the preaching monkey. The appearance of this animal is at once grotesque and forbidding. It has a dark thick beard, three inches long, hanging down from his chin. This gives it the mock air of a Capuchin friar, from which it has acquired the name of the preaching monkey. They are generally found in groups of twenty or thirty, except at their morning and evening meetings, when they assemble in vast multitudes. At these times, one of them appears, by common consent, to be the leader or president, mounts to the top of the highest tree which is near, and the rest take their places below. Having by sign commanded silence, the orator commences his harangue, consisting of variously modulated howls, sometimes sharp and quick, and then again slow and deep, but always so loud as to be heard for miles. The mingled sounds at a distance are said to resemble the rolling of drums, and the rumbling and creaking of carts with the wheels ungreased. Now and then the chief gives a signal with his hand, when the whole company begin the most frightful chorus imaginable, and with another sign silence is restored, and he goes on with his chattering. The whole scene is described as the most ludicrous, and yet the most hideous, that the imagination can conceive.

IDEAL SLEEPING ROOM.—The "ideal sleeping-room" will face the east. It will be not less than fifteen feet square, with windows on two sides for light and ventilation. For further ventilation it will have an open fireplace. The walls will be hard-finished and tinted a colour that will be restful to the eye. The woodwork will be finished in its natural colour, paint not being admitted. The floor will be of hard, polished wood, with small rugs for comfort that are shakeable weekly. Everything that would invite dust will be strictly excluded, therefore the furniture will have no extra carvings. The one hair mattress will be of the best quality, made in two parts for convenience in turning and airing, with a woven wire spring beneath. The bed clothing will be the lightest, at the same time warmest, consisting of blankets and white spread. All extra adornments of lambrequins and fancy things of no use will not find a place here. The curtains will be of thin, washable material. The "coming woman" will plan to have her bed set away from the wall for health's sake as well as convenience. Modern "conveniences" will be let alone as far as stationary wash-basin, with hot and cold water, is concerned, the portable wash-basin being used instead, she preferring to do a little extra work to running any risk of being slowly and genteelly poisoned. Her bed will be spread upon the first thing in the morning, and the sunshine and air invited to do its part towards airing and cleansing of the same, and the making of the bed will be the last of the morning duties. The "coming woman" will plan a big closet in each sleeping room, with a window for ventilation, if a possible thing. It will not be a receptacle for old boots or shoes, nor antiquated bonnets, hats, or soiled clothing. There will be plenty of hooks at the proper height for her to reach, the carpenter not forgetting to put those in the children's closet at a suitable height for them. The children will be remembered in this house, and will have a room with a hard wood floor where all their belongings can be kept, and they can play to their hearts' content, without being told not to do this or that for fear of hurting the carpet or furniture; where everything shall be usable and bangable, plenty of old chairs and boxes for trains or circuses; where they can decorate the walls with pictures, and have a good time generally.

FACETIÆ.

How often you see a country tavern with the sign hanging outside on the inn side.

They are trying to suppress the whip factories, on the ground that they deal in lickers.

Quebec people, always ready to take cold of any project, have built a splendid ice palace.

We may be sure that our consciences are rebellious when they are mute in us (mutinous).

Really, now, very few people ever come to want. If there is anything about it, it is that want comes to them.

Every woman thinks her own baby the handsomest, thus verifying the old proverb that beauty is kin deep.

It is true that bullets can sing and whistle, but they are not by any means agreeable musical companions.

It wouldn't be exactly the thing to call chestnuts eggs because they are buried (bird) fruit, would it?

Many a man adoringly calls his sweetheart an angel, and after marriage wishes she was one.

"Mrs Libbipier, you could never get the coroner's jury to sit on this soup." "Why so, Mr. Jones?" "Because there is no body to it."

Too sharp: "Do you keep any Hamburg edging?" asked a timid miss. "Not if we can sell it," was the brief reply of the clerk. He kept some that day.

"What station do you call this?" asked a man, as he crawled out of the ruins of a carriage, after a recent railway accident. "Devastation, sir," replied his fellow-passengers in chorus.

A sentimental poet says that a kiss is "the meeting of two souls." This pretty metaphor is badly shattered when a third soul, on the foot of the girl's father, puts in a sudden appearance.

It is said that a girl who can shed three or four tears at a critical moment, and follow them up with a quivering sigh, can marry all around a good-looking blonde who does nothing but try to blush.

A countryman has a dog that will not permit him to enter the house if his wife is out of temper. He says that the animal foresees a time between his master and mistress, and out of consideration for the former prevents his entrance.

Said old Professor Sharpcatch to his pupils, when he was lecturing on politeness: "Always accept a gift in a benevolent spirit. 'Never look a gift horse in the mouth' is a valuable adage. It is better to sell the gift horse for what you can get, and let the purchaser look in his mouth."

"I think, pa, that our cross neighbour is a well meaning man, after all," said a little girl to her father. "Why so, my dear?" "Because his wife says he means to dig a well, and so, of course, he is well meaning." It is reported that the old man lighted his pipe like an Arab, and as silently fled away.

A Frenchman said: "I never see so much contradiction as these English have in their drink. Day put in some whisky to make it strong, some water to make it weak, some lemon to make it sour, some sugar to make it sweet; and den dey takes up de glass, say 'Here's to you,' and den, by gor, dey drinks it themselves."

"Madam," said a young lady to her preceptor on boarding-school, "Mr. Bellfair has come to take me out to drive. May I go, Madam?" "You know, Miss, that our rules do not allow it, unless you are engaged. Are you engaged to Mr. Bellfair?" "N—no; not exactly; but if you let me go, I shall be by the time we get back."

One man gave Jones a blunt answer, and he was offended; but when another gave him a sharp one, he relished that no better.

Cold weather, one would think, would be the time for boots out of doors; and yet how many slippers may be seen upon the icy streets in winter!

THE TOMB OF LOVE.—"Mr. Smith," said a lady at a fair, "won't you please buy this bouquet to present to the lady you love?" "That could not be," said Mr. Smith; "I have no sweetheart. I am a married man."

A CORRESPONDENT wants to know if it is proper to urge a young lady to sing at an evening gathering after she has refused once. It is proper to urge her a little, but not enough to induce her to change her mind.

A GOOD old lady, a widow, having been asked if she didn't think that her husband shortened his days by too much hard work, replied: "No I don't think he did. As near as I can remember, every one of his days were just as long as other people's."

SENSIBLE CREATURES: Women somehow get over childish notions that men never outgrow. Some men celebrate the anniversary of every birthday as long as they live, while women abandon the childish custom almost as soon as they grow up.

"A BACKWARD fall," said a member of the legislature recently, when his colleague suddenly sat down on the slippery walk leading from the capitol. "An early spring," answered the nimble law maker, jumping to his feet instantaneously.—*American Paper.*

A BRIDE who was married a month ago says she makes her husband confess in the evening any wrong act he may have committed during the day. Thus far she has got him to acknowledge that he bet on the wrong horse, and twice ate pie with a knife.

"MOTHER, what is an angel?" "My dear, it is a little girl with wings, who flies." "But I heard papa telling the governess yesterday that she was an angel; will she fly?" "Yes, my dear, she will fly away the first thing to-morrow."

THE LITTLE RASCAL.—A grocer had, for his virtues, obtained the name of the "Little Rascal." A stranger asked him why this appellation was given him. "To distinguish me from the rest of my trade," quoth he, "who are all great rascals."

ROOM FOR THE MONKEY.—A humourist leaped gaily upon the step of an omnibus, and cried cheerily to the conductor, "Is the ark full?" "No, sir," replied the jovial conductor; "we have kept a seat for you. What, ho! within there! Room for the monkey, room!"

"EUGENIA, didn't I tell you an hour ago to send that young man of yours home?" "Yes, papa, dear." "But he went out only just now. I heard him." "Yes, papa, dear; but he went the first time, and then he found he'd taken your umbrella by mistake, and so he came to bring it back. Dear George is so conscientious!"

A GRAY hair was espied among the raven locks of a charming young lady. "Oh, pray, pull it out!" she exclaimed. "If I pull it out, ten more will come to the funeral," replied the one who made the unwelcome discovery. "Pluck it out, nevertheless," said the dark-haired damsel; "it's no consequence how many come to the funeral, provided they all come in black."

THERE is a very common belief among some young people that they must, immediately after an introduction, begin a discussion of books and literary matters generally. Here is a specimen conversation, accidentally and unintentionally overheard by me a day or two ago: "Do you like Shakespeare?" "Yes. Do you?" "Yes. I think Shakespeare is grand." "So do I; I think he is grand." "I think myself that a book about which ten thousand other books have been written must be somewhat 'grand.'"

"CAN I bid?" asked a droll fellow, as he put his head into an auctioneer's shop. "Certainly," replied the auctioneer. "Then I bid you good evening," he remarked, as he walked off.

AN old lady being called into court as a witness, got vexed at the lawyer, and declared, "If you don't stop asking questions I'll leave!" and then added, "You're the most inquisitive man I ever saw in all the days of my life!"

A BOY said: "When I see a lady running after a tramcar, shaking her parasol like mad, and crying out frantically, 'Here, here!' I always think that all this trouble and vexation of spirit might have been prevented if girls were only taught to whistle on their fingers."

THE BIGGEST CALL.—At a cattle show recently, a fellow who was making himself ridiculously conspicuous, at last broke forth: "Call these here prize cattle! Why, they ain't nothing to what our folks raised. My father raised the biggest calf of any man round our parts." "Don't doubt it," remarked a bystander, "and the noisiest calf, too."

A GERMAN baker found himself under the necessity of chastising his son for pilfering. The boy, being rather strong, was able to resist successfully. Thereupon the parent hired an assistant, and administered the flagellation with a hop-pole. When the boy cried for quarter, the philosophic baker granted it, saying: "I joust don't lick you more for stealing my money, but I geefs this man half crown to holt you down, and now I geefs you dat much worth more."

NORSE (showing the wedding presents to Uncle George): "I wanted you to see them all, dear Uncle George, so that you won't send a duplicate. Duplicate wedding presents are so annoying, you know." Uncle George: "H'm! What's this?" Niece: "That's papa's cheque for one thousand pounds. Isn't it lovely?" Uncle George: "Very. I intended to send the same thing, but rather than annoy you with a duplicate present I'll just make it five hundred."

A few days ago two ladies, one of whom carried a baby, entered a carpet shop and signified their desire to look at some carpets. The salesman cheerfully showed roll after roll, until the perspiration literally streamed from every pore of his body. Finally one of the ladies asked the other if she did not think it was time to go. "Not quite," was the answer of her companion, and then, in an undertone, she added: "Baby likes to see him roll them out, and it is not time to take the train yet."

LITTLE NELL (to Visitor): "Oh, I have such good news. Mamma and papa and I are all going to another city to live." Visitor: "Indeed! You amaze me. What city is it?" Little Nell: "It has such a funny name. It is called Harry, and it's an awful old city." Visitor: "Oh, you must have heard the name wrong." Little Nell: "Oh, no, I didn't. It was at the breakfast-table. Papa told mamma to go the Old Harry, and mamma told papa to go there herself, and then I asked them to take me, and they didn't say anything; but I know they will."

He was the son of a worthy Liverpoolian, and he had just returned from college. The father was a brusque, matter-of-fact man, who had no liking for anything masquerading, and he noticed with sorrow that his son returned with bangles and various other insignia of masquerade. The old gentleman surveyed him critically when he appeared in his office, and then blurted out: "Young man, you look like a fool!" Just at that moment, and before the young man had time to make a fitting reply, a friend walked in. "Why, hello, George, have you returned?" he asked. "Dear me, how much you resemble your father!" "So he has just been telling me," replied the youth.

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCE OF WALES recently entertained Prince Alexander of Hesse and Prince Alexander of Battenberg at the Marlborough Club, and, after the repast, the party adjourned to the Alhambra. The prince dined at the same establishment on the following evening, as the guest of Mr. Mackenzie of Kintail, whose party included Sir Henry James, Sir Henry Hawkins, and Lord Lathom. The prince went off after dinner to the smoking concert of the Orchestral Society, and finished the night at the New Club.

THE SULTAN, at a gala dinner given by him at Yildiz Kiosk in honour of the Comte de Montebello, the French Ambassador, his Majesty conferred upon the Comtesse de Montebello the Grand Cordon of the Chevalier Order.

THE SECOND LADIES' SUBSCRIPTION BALL was given on Tuesday night (Dec. 21) in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, dancing taking place in the music room, to the strains of Gates' band, and supper served in the north drawing-room. The decorations were tastefully managed. The patronesses were Lady Fletcher, Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Wyndham, Mrs. Cameron Shute, Mrs. Hitchens, and Miss Whitmore. Amongst those present were Lady Elizabeth Bertie, the Hon. R. Bellow, Gen. Shute, Col. Cleve, Major H. Spillar, Major Vandeleur, Major Bartolot, Capt. George, Mrs. Burrell, the Misses Errington, Mr. and the Misses Fitzhugh, Mrs. and Miss Jennings, &c. Some pretty dresses were worn: Mrs. Hitchens was in black velvet relieved by red; Mrs. Cameron Shute, in black velvet; Miss Shute, in white; Mrs. Charles Smith, in white embossed satin; Miss Ramsay, grey tulle and velvet, the bodice being of the velvet outlined with grey pearls; and the full skirt, simply draped, of tulle; Miss E. Ramsay wore pale pink net with chenille spots; Miss Hitchens, pale blue tulle; Miss Macintyre, canary crepe de Chine and pale green satin, her bouquet being of yellow tulips; Miss Gina Macintyre, pale mauve point d'esprit, with corsage of the same colour in satin, bouquet of white flowers; Miss L. Mowatt, pure white, a *débutante's* dress; the Misses Puleston were dressed alike, in red satin and red checked gauze, with aigrettes in the hair; Miss Skirrow, in black net and lace, looped up with narrow red, blue, and green ribbons in a remarkably pretty manner.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHRISTIAN and a distinguished party are expected at Eaton Hall early in the month on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Westminster.

PRINCE CHRISTIAN VICTOR has returned from Magdalen College, Oxford, and Prince Albert from Charterhouse School, to Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, in order to spend Christmas with Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein.

THE KING OF SWEDEN, with Prince Oscar, Prince Carl, and Prince Eugen, besides several invited guests, left Stockholm on the day after Christmas Day for Drottningholm Castle for a few days' shooting and fishing, weather permitting. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess would leave Stockholm on Monday, December 27, for Tullgarn Castle, where their royal highnesses were to spend the remainder of the week. The Crown Princess will, during her stay in the country, be busy distributing Christmas-boxes to the children of the large estate; and the new schools for "alöjd," that is domestic, more or less artistic, sewing, weaving, &c., which have been erected at the command of her royal highness, will also require her attention.

THE MARRIAGE of Lilian Evelyn, youngest daughter of Major John Angelo, and Surgeon R. J. Polden, Indian Medical Service, was solemnised at Christ Church, Raval Pindi, Punjab, India, by the Rev. F. Armstrong, M.A., on November 23, at 11 A.M.

STATISTICS.

WILD ANIMALS IN PRUSSIA.—Some interesting information is published with regard to the quantity of game and vermin killed in Prussia during the year ending March 31, 1886. The value of the game killed is estimated at £600,000, and this sum would have been much smaller but for the untiring vigilance of the officials of woods and forests and of keepers employed by the various holders of land and shooting, who killed in the course of the year 140,399 head of vermin and 119,691 birds of prey. The vermin comprised 84,301 foxes, 27,108 stoats, 23,578 weasels, 5,475 martens, 5,375 polecats, 5,051 badgers, 4,092 otters, and 606 wild cats. Up to the present time crows and magpies have not been ranked as birds of prey, but they will be in future, as it is found that they do an enormous amount of damage. There are very few wolves in Prussia, only four having been killed, and it is a curious fact that the German wolves seem to have followed the German army almost *en masse* into France during the winter of 1870, and to have remained there. In the annexed provinces of Alsace and Lorraine the number of wolves killed during the year was thirty-seven, in addition to 2,680 foxes and 152 wild cats.

GEMS.

CONQUER thyself. Till thou hast done that, thou art a slave; for it is almost as well for thee to be in subjection to another's appetite as thy own.

ENDEAVOUR to be first in thy calling, whatever it may be, neither let any one go before thee in well-doing; nevertheless, do not envy the merits of another, but improve thine own talents.

We cannot bind ourselves rigidly with our plans, try as hard as we may; or settle everything beforehand. Something is sure to unsettle, and to shake into a better shape than we had intended. And if a thing is really good, sooner or later we get it.

MEN of strength of purpose and customary sagacity, if they chance to adopt a mistaken opinion in practical matters, so wedge it and fasten it among things known to be true, that to wrench it out of their minds is hardly less difficult than pulling up an oak.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE FRITTERS.—Slice four apples very thin, make a batter of flour and milk, using a pint of milk; add the apples and the yolks of two eggs well beaten. Just at the last put in the whites of the eggs, beaten very light, and fry in boiling lard. Eat with molaasses sauce.

BOILED APPLE BALLS.—Peel, core, and cut up into dice two pounds of good apples; put them in a basin, and mix with them one-half pound of sugar, the grated rind of a lemon, one ounce of butter, quarter-pint of milk, and six eggs, the whites of which must be beaten to a froth, then add as much bread crumbs as will make the mixture stiff; roll it up into small balls, and boil it in salted water. Serve with wine sauce.

HURRY SOUVENY PUDING.—Cut some stale bread in slices rather more than half an inch thick, and soak them in milk, flavoured with vanilla, or any essence that may be liked. Place the slices on a strainer, and then fry a bright golden-brown colour. Arrange neatly in a dish, and pour over all some jam-sauce; or the slices can be served with powdered sugar instead of sauce. Any pieces of light bread can be employed in this way, only they should be all cut the same shape, to ensure a neat appearance.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HOWEVER mean or inconsiderable the act, there is something in the well-doing of it which has fellowship with the noblest forms of manly virtue. Thus every action, down to the drawing of a line or utterance of a syllable, is capable of a peculiar dignity in the manner of it, and capable of a still higher dignity in the motive of it. For there is no action so slight nor so mean but it may be done to a great purpose, and ennobled therefore; nor is any purpose so great but that slight actions may help it, and may be so done as to help it much, most especially that chief of all purposes, the pleasing of God.

CAMELS IN EGYPT.—A word here as to the camel, the much-belauded "ship of the desert," that enjoys among those who have not come into contact with him a much better reputation than he deserves. Patience is a virtue with which he is supposed to be pre-eminently endowed. As far as my experience goes, he is about the most impatient brute in the whole animal creation. He grumbles and swears when required to stop; he roars at you when you get on and roars at you when you get off, as he does when he is laden and when he is unladen. His patience is generally the result of senility. He is usually vicious, and is irremediably addicted to bolting. Neither is his intelligence sufficiently strong to allow him to distinguish noxious plants, and he is at all times a subject of anxiety to his driver on this account.

MEN AS COOKS.—An hotel-keeper says that in large establishments few women are engaged as cooks. They are not competent. A woman cook will scarcely ever make one thing twice alike. They take too many chances, trust too much to luck, and in consequence fail repeatedly. They hardly ever prepare their dishes according to any fixed rule as to the weight or measurement of the ingredients. On the contrary, they are disposed to lump things: "About a teaspoonful of this, a cupful of that, and when near done stir in a little seasoning." They pay no attention to the size of the teaspoon or the cup, and insert the seasoning when and where it may please their fancy to do so. Now a man cook works quite to the contrary; every ingredient he uses is as accurately measured and weighed as a druggist's prescription, and the mixing and cooking of the same are calculated and timed as carefully as the hours allotted by the doctor for the patient's medicine. Even the purity and character of the goods are inquired into. Nothing is left to chance, and hence there are no failures to be followed by that feminine excuse, "I don't see why it is I should have such luck. I cannot understand it."

SWEDISH MANNERS.—One great peculiarity of travelling in Sweden is the extreme quiet and lack of flurry. The Swedish are a taciturn and noiseless people. They do much by signs, and never shout; a Swedish crowd makes similarly little sound. Swedes, even of the lowest class, never push or jostle. It is the custom to do so much bowing and hat-lifting that one is obliged to move more slowly than in England to give time for all this court-ney. When a train leaves a platform or a steam-boat pier all the lookers-on lift their hats to the departing passengers and bow to them, a compliment returned by the travellers. If you address the poorest person in the street you must lift your hat. A gentleman passing a lady on the stairs of an hotel must do the same. To enter a shop or a bank with one's hat on is a terrible breach of good manners. If you enter or leave a coffee-room you must bow to all the occupants. Passengers on board the little steamers which ply about Stockholm invariably raise their hats to the occupants of any other boat which passes near them. The very men in charge of the locks on the canal bow politely to the sailors as the boats go through. Imagine British barges indulging in such amenities.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. T.—There are several standard works on practical quotations, procurable at a book-store.

AFREET.—Many of the insurance companies will lend an amount on one of their own policies of life insurance proportionate to the "surrender value" of the policy.

L. M.—The furnishing of addresses of any description is not permitted in this column, and for that reason it is useless for readers to send communications containing requests for such information.

E. S. S.—Ninety parts of either Burgundy or Canada pitch are melted with ten parts of yellow wax; the mixture is strained and stirred constantly until it thickens upon cooling. This form of tar plaster does not seem to be much used at present.

E. B. B.—You could follow him and see him there, but that would be troublesome and expensive. Perhaps if you wait a while he will visit somebody in town, and then you can see him at your home, and make him give half to appear at the trial of the case.

E. H. W.—In the process of gilding, a little pure gold goes a great way. The button-makers have got the process down so fine that they can gild a gross of buttons (144) with three-pennyworth of gold. This would be only a farthing's worth of gold to a dozen buttons.

E. A. A.—If he is a man of property, the girl could probably recover the amount of the doctor's bill from him, and damages besides for his breach of promise. If the facts are as you state them, and if they can be proved, a jury would be apt to give her a heavy verdict against her faithless lover.

F. B.—The deepest artesian well at Pösth, in Hungary, yields hot water—that is to say, water having a temperature of 158 degrees Fahrenheit; and it is proposed to sink it deeper, in order to get water still warmer for the public baths. The present depth is 3,150 feet.

E. D. K.—Most of the larger histories mention the names of the three vessels which bore Columbus and his companions to the West Indies. The largest, which bore the admiral himself, was called the *Santa Maria*, and the two smaller were called the *Pinta* and the *Nina* respectively.

C. H. H.—I. The work of digging the ship canal between Panama and Colon is now vigorously pushed. It is said that even three years ago 11,000 men were engaged on the great ditch. 2. The canal starts at the port of Panama. 3. The actual digging is largely done by Jamaican negroes, who get from four to six shillings a day. The climate is very unhealthy.

E. W.—Mark Twain is the *nom de plume*, and Samuel Langhorne Clemens is the real name. The writer in the newspaper probably intended by his remark playfully to imply that the *nom de plume* was so popular, and so identified with the author, that people preferred to consider it his real name rather than that by which he is known to friends and neighbours.

L. S.—In the course of a paper on diphtheria, in the *Lancet*, Professor George Buchanan makes this interesting remark: "Theoretically, air moistened with steam is better for the lungs than dry air. Practically, I have found that warm fresh air gives better results." Fresh air, properly heated by an open fire, is recommended for children suffering from diphtheria, as preferable to the steam baths to which they are sometimes subjected.

E. B. S.—Give the girl time and opportunity, and her taste will largely correct itself. She is now like a child with a lot of new toys. When she becomes accustomed to jewellery and fine clothes, and sees how the young ladies of her acquaintance dress, she will begin to imitate them. Get her interested in books and help her to develop her mind as much as you can, and she will ultimately acquire a knowledge of society and a taste in dress that will doubtless satisfy you to a reasonable extent, if not completely.

LENN.—If the gentleman said that he had eaten butter which grew on trees, he was just as far from the truth as anyone would be who should say that he had eaten butter which was given by cows. Cows give milk from which butter is made; and certain trees yield seeds that are manufactured into butter. Such trees grow in India and also in Africa. The seeds of their fruit are manufactured, by different processes, into both oil and butter; and from the flowers of some of the trees an intoxicating beverage is distilled.

G. H. Y.—The poor women of that age were busy working in the fields and doing the drudgery of the household about the same as they are now employed in most of the countries of Europe. The wives and daughters of knights and noblemen spent their time mostly in needlework, and their chief out-door amusement was hawkng. They had minstrels to recite poems and sing to them, and were devout attendants at church. When they visited one another, they went on horseback and under the escort of armed attendants, as the country was thickly infested with robbers. Occasionally a young lady was captured by banditti and held to ransom, as sometimes happens now in Italy, Greece, and Spain; and if her friends did not make haste to ransom her, her captors would cut off one of her ears, or a finger, and send it to her home to hasten the marital movements of her family. On the whole, the lives of ladies, old and young, during the Crusades, were not so happy or so useful as they are in this last quarter of the nineteenth century.

DELO.—The positive philosophy of Comte has influenced almost all philosophic thought, but the number of professed Comtists in this country is very small. No estimate is made of their numbers, but they bear no comparison with those of the Episcopalians, or of any other important religious body.

W. C. W.—"Got" is the past participle of the verb "to get," and is quite proper in its proper place. If you have just acquired an apple you are justified in saying, "I have got it;" "got" is only wrong when your real meaning is simply that the apple is in your possession. You should then say, "I have it."

F. S. S.—In some cases it injures a person's voice to play a wind instrument, and in others it does not. You can only settle the question in your own case by actual experiment. If you find that playing the horn has a tendency to injure your voice, you can of course give it up before serious injury is done.

Z. T. R.—A tricycle has been proposed for the use of railway superintendents, with two wheels on one rail, and one small supporting wheel on the other; but we do not know of its being in actual use on any railway at present. We have never heard of a bicycle designed for a single rail, and we do not think that such a machine could be used by anyone but an adventurous and practised "fancy" rider.

C. F.—When a lady is accosted in the street by a perfect stranger, she should pay no attention to the greeting. If the person persists in his insulting actions, and she cannot avoid him, she should hand him over to a policeman. To be sure, a lady does not care to appear in a police court to make charges against anyone, but there are cases when such a course is unavoidable.

THE CHERISHED FORFEIT.

I found, among her treasures here,
O, that to her was very dear,
'Twas placed, together with the rest,
Securely in this fragrant chest.
'Tis but a pair of gloves, you see,
Wrapped up in satin tenderly;
Unsoiled and white, they seemed to bear
Scarce any signs of age or wear;
And why? The story's not amiss—
You love her memory—it is this:

A wager once between us laid,
She won, and I the forfeit paid;
She blushed, but yet the gloves away,
Nor ever wore them from that day;
Half-muffled I felt at my poor lot,
Yet soon the incident forgot;
For, ere another year was flown,
Love had within our bosoms grown
Too power to strong, and pure, and sweet,
That hymen made our bliss complete.

That evening, when the knot was tied,
And she was now my own dear bride,
Bound to my heart with loving bands,
She took my face between her hands,
And bent her tender eyes on mine,
And said, "My love, these gloves were thine,
The forfeit paid me at your cost;
But now what then you sought and lost
Is yours for ever." Joyfully
Too kiss I lost was given me.

W. B. D.

W. T. R.—The idea that many fragrant flowers are not so attractive to insects as other flowers with less pleasing odours is not new. It was suggested at a recent meeting of the Entomological Society of London by Mr. J. W. Blater, who said he had noticed that petunias were comparatively neglected by flies, bees and butterflies. Other members, however, insisted that insects were very fond of frequenting petunias.

H. A. R.—We cannot give ordinary business addresses in these columns. If you want only a few of the glass prisms, used largely to ornament chandeliers, you should apply to some of the manufacturers of the more ornamental kind of gas fixtures. If you want a large number of the prisms, or simply thick pieces of coloured glass, you should write to some of the importers of glass. You can find the names of those engaged in those businesses in any business directory.

E. H. S.—There are too many people who make meaning well an excuse for all kinds of impertinence and meddlesomeness, and go on from day to day in a course which occasions their friends the most intolerable annoyances. Such people ought to be set right and taught to mind their own business. They should also be led to see that they can never be too vigilant in guarding against this easy palliation of intrusive and meddlesome conduct, and that they should not only mean well, but also take the proper means for forming a sound judgment and correct rules of action.

M. T.—The *Louis-d'or*, or golden Louis, was a gold coin introduced into France in 1641, and coined until 1795. It originated in consequence of the prevalent custom of clipping and otherwise defacing the existing coins of the realm, from which evil practice it was thought to be in some measure secured by its border. This coin ranged in value from about 15s. to 21s. Some of them bear special names, chiefly derived from the figure exhibited on the obverse side. In some parts of Germany the large gold pieces of five thalers or thereabouts are often popularly called *Louis-d'or*, and the name is also occasionally applied to the French napoleon, or 20-franc piece.

C. H.—It is doubtful. The two neighbours and your man, who tell you that they are sure that the cow's death was occasioned by the bite of the dog, might not be able to cause a jury to agree with them on that point. They would not be allowed to testify as to what they believe, but only as to what they know. A skilful lawyer might be able to present your case so as to get a verdict in your favour, but the probabilities are against you.

CONSTANT READER.—Numerous substances are used as invisible inks, being developed by the aid of heat or some other agency. Sulphate of copper and sal ammoniac, mixed in equal parts, will become yellow if exposed to the fire; onion juice has the same property as this mixture. Lemon juice, a very weak solution of common salt, or of saltpetre, will also turn yellow or brown when brought in contact with heat. A diluted solution of nitrate of silver turns brown by exposure to sunlight, and chloride of antimony, used as an ink, will become yellow by moistening with a decoction of galls.

L. P. S.—Yes. In many cases there are peculiar technical or professional words and phrases which it is proper to use in writing orders for technical or professional purposes, although such words and phrases might be inadmissible under any other circumstances. But the word "addresses" is not one of that kind. Although it has not yet got into the dictionary, it has come largely into use, and is so convenient that the people will no more give it up than they will cease to use the words *patentes*, *mortgages*, and others of a similar kind. The phrase, "when held-for-postage matter bears," &c., is grammatically correct and can be easily parsed. "Held-for-postage" is an adjective, qualifying the noun "matter," and "matter" is the noun-nature of the verb "bears."

E. P. P.—Your uncle is mistaken. It was Sir Henry Bulwer, the diplomatist, who was a brother of Bulwer the novelist, that your uncle heard speak on the occasion to which he refers. Sir Henry Bulwer was then the English minister to America, and Daniel Webster was Secretary of State in President Fillmore's administration. Webster and Bulwer were warm friends, and repeatedly made addresses together on public occasions. Bulwer's speeches were always much liked, and he acquired a great reputation as a public speaker. His brother, the novelist, was also a good speaker, but he never made a speech in the United States. He never visited that country.

C. H. R.—The gentleman's statement was partly correct and partly incorrect. The idea embodied in the phrase you mention was not original with Mr. Lincoln, or with Theodore Parker, either. It originated with Daniel Webster. In his famous reply to Hayne, delivered in the U.S. Senate in 1850, Mr. Webster, in speaking of the government of the United States, called it "The people's government," made for the people, made by the people and answerable to the people." In 1850, Theodore Parker, in defining a true democracy, used Webster's idea, and called it, "A government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people." It is well known that Mr. Lincoln was familiar with Webster's reply to Hayne, and he knew that others were also familiar with it.

T. M.—There is no reason to suppose that Burns and Byron ever met each other. The report that they met may have arisen from the fact that Byron's mother was a Scotchwoman. But Byron was only eight years old when Burns died, in 1796. There was some similarity of disposition and character between them. They were both exceedingly independent, clear-sighted, and discontented. They both had an unhappy time of it while they lived; and it is noticeable that their lives were nearly equal in duration. Byron dying at the age of thirty-six, and Burns at thirty-seven. As to which of them was the better poet is a question which nobody can authoritatively determine. Each was superlatively good in his own line. It is the opinion of some critics that Burns's poetry will outlive Byron's, because it more truly expresses those fundamental affections of the human heart which are common to all mankind. Other critics think that Byron's poetry will outlive that of every other British poet except Chaucer's, Spenser's, Shakespeare's, and Milton's. It is obvious that time alone can settle such a question.

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